

Christ Before Pilate

WALDEMAR AGER



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*An
American
Story*

By
WALDEMAR AGER
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CHAPTER I

There were two Norwegian churches in town. One was a large and beautiful edifice in a desirable locality, while the other was a small wooden structure whose steeple scarcely rose above the neighboring chimneys.

Rev. Mr. Mosevig, who served the small church, looked with scorn upon Rev. Mr. Welde, who served the large one. He did not even like the church building itself. Stained glass windows and decorations in general were to him only the lust of the eyes and a superfluity. The Lord would certainly permit His gracious Spirit to descend upon His servant even tho the pulpit had no gilded moldings or carved panels, and He received the sinners who came to Him even tho there were no velvet cushions for them to kneel upon. Pastor Mosevig often gave expression to these sentiments, and could not avoid drawing comparisons between himself and Pastor Welde. Like the apostles of old, he himself had been called, so to speak, from the workshop to the pulpit. In his youth he had been a sailor, and after coming over to this country he had worked as a carpenter and had preached the Gospel to his countrymen whenever an opportunity presented itself. With joy he dwelt upon this period of his life, for his efforts had not been without fruit, and it was upon the urgent request of his many friends that he had decided to enter the ministry. There had, in fact, been something unusual about his whole life. With only two years' schooling, and those at an advanced age, he had succeeded in mastering the essentials, and he felt the divine call so clearly. When he had handled his carpenter's tools, they had all seemed to have a spiritual significance to him. The hammer

was a reminder of the Word of God, which breaketh the rock to pieces; the square was a symbol of the measure with which all shall be measured; and a piece of lumber would remind him of the tree of knowledge and the tree of life described in Genesis 11:9, as well as of the true Vine upon which he, in spite of his imperfections, could count himself a branch.

Having thus been incessantly reminded of his duty to testify to others, he had found no peace until he decided to enter a theological school for a brief period of training, and then to take up the work of guiding human souls back to the fold in earnest.

His thoughts dwelt with humility upon his lowly parentage and the fisherman's hut which had been his home in Norway. But the humility was also mingled with a spark of pride. Who would have thought that the little boy who sat shivering with cold in the old fisherboat, often suffering from want, should grow up to be a minister of the Gospel? Surely he had been guided by a power other than that of man.

But what manner of call had this Pastor Welde received? Again and again he asked himself this question, and with an ironical smile he summed up the answer: the Welde family belonged to the old aristocracy of Norway. The father and the grandfather were both ministers, the one more austere and unbending than the other. Call? Yes, the call passed from father to son as a family inheritance among the Weldes. The one appointed the other, the eldest son entering his father's profession as a matter of course. But did they have any call from their heavenly Father? Mosevig shrugged his shoulders at the thought but could not shake it off. Descending from such a family, one could enjoy all the advantages of travel and study, could learn all the languages of the world, and there would be no difficulty in securing the pas-

torate of a wealthy church. But as to the Spiritual, that was a different matter. He could expound all the difficult theological periodicals, but in order to deliver a sermon he would first have to write it down on paper, take it to the pulpit, and read it. As for himself, he had never taken thought of what he should speak. His sermons came to him as an inspiration, and he could preach as often and as long as he desired and never run out of words. He drew from the inexhaustible fountain and could not but pity those who sought to refresh famished souls from the dusty shelves of their own worldly wisdom. And still, was not that what the world wanted? But in order to show others the way of salvation it was necessary for one to have trodden upon it himself. He recalled his early life, previous to his conversion in the Seamen's Church in Pensacola. It had been no worse than that of others, perhaps, but he found a certain joy in dwelling upon the darkest phases of it. His life was divided into two distinct epochs—the time of darkness and the time of light, and against the dark background he seemed to see the light with greater clearness, as when one who has been blind regains his sight. But how could anyone guide others over a path upon which he himself had not trodden? He doubted that Rev. Mr. Welde had ever experienced any real conversion.

The charge Pastor Mosevig was now serving was not his first. It had been his fate, that when he had worked in a place until the church had become self-supporting, something would turn up and his services were transferred to another locality. He was able to get along with meager means, a thing necessary in the place where he now was. The larger church on the East Side hindered the growth of the smaller one. All the new families moving in joined that one, and

the minister over there was called to officiate at nearly all weddings, funerals, christenings, etc., thereby increasing his income at the expense of the other. Those who had never formally joined either of the two churches considered themselves as members at the larger one, and when an inquiry was made in town for a Norwegian church or minister, they were directed there as a matter of course, as few seemed to be aware of the existence of another Norwegian church in the town. The ladies' aid society in Pastor Welde's church would take in twenty dollars at a meeting, and the offerings in his church would run into hundreds. Mr. Brooten, the rich banker, contributed more alone to the church treasury than the amount of Pastor Mosevig's salary for the entire year. The young people sought Pastor Welde's church as they felt more at home there, and rooms were fitted up in the basement, where they could have their meetings. Pastor Mosevig reflected with bitterness that it was small wonder that the East Side church prospered materially, tho to him it resembled the valley filled with dead bones.

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Rev. Conrad Walther Welde was returning from a walk. He was still almost a stranger in town, and the desire to become better acquainted with his surroundings, as well as the enchanting air of early spring, had drawn him out of doors. During his walk he had made the discovery that the place was very beautiful, and he had seen several bits of scenery that ought to be painted. The mill-pond, for instance, was very picturesque. Especially he had noticed a great rock projecting into the pond. In a rift there grew a dwarfed pine. The large roots lay gnarled and bare, but they evidently struck deep somewhere, for the growth of the tree was as vigorous as its appearance

was scraggy. It fitted in so admirably with the surroundings. Hundreds of thousands of logs had passed it on their way to the saw-mill, where they had lost their identity amid much groaning and buzzing. The giants of the forest had been felled, but the misshapen pine had been spared. There was a wonderful play of colors on the mill-pond. The pale green background, the dead leaves from last year, all sought reflection in the water, but there fell also the shadow of the dwarfed pine, and the various shades of green found reflection in that deeper green. That was what made the mill-pond so interesting.

Yes, it ought to be painted. To him everything ought to be painted—faces, horses, cows, old houses, even mud puddles,—yes, everything ought to be painted. But she—who was to do all this painting—how did she fare? He could still see her as she sat at her easel, always in a strong light, always with a half-finished canvas before her, and with a halo of light about her as she worked. He had often watched her when she painted and had to direct his conversation at her neck—a slim little neck that could make responses to what he said with expressive half-turns, which he could interpret to his own liking. Occasionally she would turn around to glance at him, radiantly, teasingly. It had affected him like a warm shower, followed by a slight chill. “Maggie, Maggie!” He repeated the name audibly, with an effort.

He had now reached Main Street. The perfect lines of his tall figure were brought out by his modish, close-fitting coat, and a wealth of wavy hair was visible beneath his tall hat. He carried an umbrella under his arm and his slender, gloved hand was constantly being raised to his hat in recognition of the greetings he received. Many of those whom he met,

especially among the ladies, seemed to know him, and a smile of pleasure lighted up his youthful face at the thought that so many already knew him.

Suddenly he noticed the bent and awkward figure of a man with a blond beard and nickel-rimmed glasses. It was Pastor Mosevig. Welde grew attentive immediately and glanced toward him. He had met him several times in the same manner but Mosevig had never spoken. Would he notice him now? As he drew nearer, Pastor Welde observed how the threadbare coat had faded to a yellowish brown across the shoulders and that the crown of his hat was quite green. He also noticed the large, protruding jaws and mouth, scantily covered with a thin beard, the freckled hands and his large, flat shoes. Would Pastor Mosevig recognize him this time? No! He absent-mindedly gazed at the row of houses across the street. Welde, himself, would have spoken first had Mosevig only looked his way, but this he did not do. After they had passed each other, Welde could not keep from turning to catch another glimpse of him. As on former occasions, the sight of the bent figure touched him with a feeling of pity and an inexplicable sense of guilt. There was a sullen, helpless expression in the lines about that protruding mouth of his,—harassed, but also brutish, at once reminding one of a fish and a bulldog.

Pastor Welde reflected as he passed on, that just such an expression would be developed in people who for generations have had to keep their mouths shut, people forced to suffer in silence, people who have had to fight back the hot tears and the bitter words which clamored for utterance, people who have swallowed choking grievances down a parched throat. Such mouth and jaw outfits stand for the complaints of generations, complaints to which no one has cared

to listen. And besides, he recalled things he had heard about Pastor Mosevig and his church. The young ladies of his own choir often held up the Mosevig church choir to ridicule, and told how Mrs. Mosevig would sometimes sing contralto with the baby in her arms when their regular alto was absent. A married woman, two half-grown girls, the minister's daughter, an old deacon who functioned as basso, and a grocery clerk who courted the minister's daughter—these completed the whole personnel. They would also tell that Mosevig wore the strangest looking collars with his clerical garb because his wife had to do the fluting at home.

Welde could, in his mind, see Mosevig speaking to the sparsely occupied pews, and he wondered how a family could subsist on five hundred dollars a year. He had never been able to rid his mind of this shabby and careworn figure. It confronted him in church, at prayers, and while in his study, and it always seemed to remind him of some wrong committed long ago—a debt which he could neither admit nor deny, a sort of claim which he could neither acknowledge nor yet refuse to recognize. But why this feeling? It could not possibly be his fault that Mrs. Mosevig had to sing in the choir with the baby in her arms, nor could he help that she had to do up her husband's collars herself. Should he, a stranger, be blamed because these obstinate people persisted in maintaining a positively superfluous Lutheran church in town? Could he be held responsible for their minister's faded coat and hat? Or for the reproach and suffering expressed by that mouth and those jaws of his? No, No—the thought was absurd. But Pastor Mosevig had entered his mind as an accusation or protest against himself—against Rev. Conrad Walther Welde and against no one else. He tried to dismiss this fool-

ish feeling, telling himself over and over again that Mosevig was really of a type common in all denominations—ignorant and aggressive, a type of men who seek to make themselves conspicuous by a loud voice, sullenness, and disregard of personal appearance. This was an entirely satisfactory conclusion when in the company of others; but when Pastor Welde was alone, Mosevig would always rise before him in reproach. This feeling increased whenever he was told that some of Mosevig's people had begun to attend his church. He could not bear the thought of taking anything away from one who had so little, and, after all, Pastor Mosevig preached the same Gospel and administered the same sacraments as Pastor Welde did.

Pastor Welde had now reached home. Having no family, he made use only of two or three rooms, leaving the rest of the parsonage to the disposal of his trusty housekeeper, a very capable, elderly woman. She always had coffee ready for him when he returned from his habitual walks in the afternoon. She had kept house for two ministers in this country, and knew how things should be done. She arranged the dainty sandwiches on a small plate and appeared with the tray just as the minister was hanging up his coat and hat. His slippers were ready for him, not a speck of dust could be detected anywhere. Jorgina herself stood before him irreproachable, righteous, and grave of mien, holding the tray in her hand and courtesying. This was what the occasion demanded of her. Frankly, Welde liked neither her nor her coffee. He would have preferred a younger person, and a cup of tea. He had always noticed that tea-drinkers develop a taste for weaker tea the more they learn to appreciate it, while, on the other hand, coffee-drinkers increase

both quantity and quality until it becomes positively harmful. He would have given a good deal for a cup of tea instead of the usual coffee, but had never dared to make a direct request for it. Jorgina herself, enjoyed a cup of coffee in the afternoon and would likely deny herself this if he did not also drink one. He had once bravely ventured the suggestion that some people prefer tea to coffee in the afternoon, but when Jorgina had flatly denied this he had dropped the subject and resigned himself to his fate. He even cracked jokes about it:

“You spoil me with this delicious coffee of yours so I learn to like it—and to think that once upon a time I drank only tea!”

With beaming face, Jorgina said: “Yes, the pastor knows there are two ways of making coffee. There is coffee and there is coffee. Pastor Wangel of the Synod wanted his coffee steeped, but Pastor Nelson of the United Church wanted it just the way we made it in Norway, just as strong as it could be made.” And as she filled his cup while her adoring gaze rested upon the clear, brown stream, she wondered if the minister noticed how clear it was. He felt that he ought to say something and ventured:

“So they liked different kinds of coffee? You mean to say that they had different tastes with regard to coffee, do you? You and I stick to the Synod coffee, do we not?” but instantly he saw his mistake.

With an injured air Jorgina set the cup down and pulled nervously at the corner of her apron. The minister felt that he had to make amends in some way; so he tasted the coffee, dropped a piece of sugar into it, and seemed lost in meditation. Then cautiously: “Pastor Nelson is still living, is he not?”

“Still living? Why, yes, he is alive and well, as far as I know.”

"So he is still living, is he? Strange, is it not? Perhaps we had better drink the same kind of coffee that he did, it can be no worse for us than for him. He must be pretty old by this time?"

He got no further, for Jorgina was already on her way out of the room, and as she vanished she sharply retorted: "Yes, perhaps the pastor also may live to be old, but it is very uncertain if I am to be much older in this place!" And the door closed with a bang.

The minister ate his sandwiches in dismay. He had certainly acted like an ass. Why did he refer to age, anyway? Jorgina herself was old. Her wrinkled face was a veritable burial-place for dead hopes and prospects. She, too, no doubt, had had her dreams a score of years ago or more, two-score, perhaps. A score more or less would not matter much in a case like hers. He pondered for a while, and then, draining his cup, he opened the door and called: "Jorgina?"

"Yes, Sir!" The voice in the kitchen sounded muffled.

"May I have another cup of coffee?" There was a clatter of crockery, and she appeared in the door, holding the coffee pot in her hand. As she poured, her hand trembled slightly, but there was a smile on her lips. The victory was her's.

When she had gone the minister walked about the room, cup in hand, seeking for a place where he might pour it out and yet escape detection, but he gave it up. Besides, it did not seem quite fair to her, so he gulped it down, knowing that he would sacrifice half a night's sleep. Then he dropped resolutely into his chair, murmuring: "Another such victory, and I am undone! Poor Pyrrhus!" Had Jorgina known that he had taken poison just to please her, she would not have flared up in such anger. He laughed to himself and lit a cigar. He did not smoke often, but after the coffee a cigar would always taste good.

He remained a while before the open window. His life was really altogether too tranquil. All his parishioners were so kind and congenial—too kind, in fact, well-nigh carrying him on their hands. He was growing spoiled, hopelessly spoiled. Yet there was enough work to do, work that ought to be taken up immediately. Something should be done, especially for the young people. He had thought of starting a society for them which would not be too exclusively religious, something of a rather literary nature, with debates, perhaps, and dialogs, recitations, readings, etc. Something that would draw the young people to the church. He began to pace back and forth in the room, but could formulate no definite plan. Again Mosevig came before him with his thin beard and protruding mouth. He would have to gain this man's good will, try to think of some way—try to let him understand. Well, what could he think of? What should he let him understand? He had done him no harm, and had nothing to explain.

He paused as if in doubt before a picture on the wall. He had many pictures, some were framed and some were not. He loved pictures, and his room at home had been filled with them, as was also his room at college. Pictures, pictures everywhere! The picture in front of which he was standing was conspicuously large. It was a copy of the famous Muncaczy's "Christ before Pilate," which had been left there by the former pastor. He had often studied it and had made up his mind that this picture represented real art. At times he flattered himself that he was something of an art critic, and would tell himself that the figure of Pilate on the judgment seat was out of proportion, that the left shoulder was too large, and that the left arm of the one who stood shouting was too long, and also the arm of the one who was pointing

from the background. But it was art; no doubt about that! There is Pilate, and before him Christ in His white raiment, while a Roman soldier with a lance forces the people, the mob, back. Around the tribune sit the priests and the Pharisees—where else should they be? A high priest to whom no one seems to listen is arraigning Jesus; in the rear a woman with a child in her arms emerges from the shadows.

He had seen various types of people in this picture before. He had noted the cruel ones, the vulgar, the ignorant, the malicious, the thoughtless ones—all the different elements who wished Barabbas liberated. But now it was as if the picture took on a new aspect—it became more intensified, as he looked at it. There were really only two kinds of people there—the woman with the child excepted, of course—and they were those who had huge jaws and mouths and those who did not. It was Christ and Pilate—and certainly that woman with the child—against all the others. But as no one took any account of women in those days anyway, it was Christ and Pilate against all the rest. The mob was the Mosevigians, he thought with reckless abandon. The whole “Crucify Him” crowd was a people with large snouts—or accumulations around the mouth—pressing forward. It was—yes, what else could it be?—it was surely the unhappy and oppressed Jewish people who had become enraged because Jesus had not brought the long expected salvation from political bondage. Yes, it was the vast amount of hate and the suppressed accusations which the proud tribe of Judah had stored up for generations, back of their mouths. Look at that soldier’s lance! It has certainly taught them respect; but who thinks of that old lance now? And then the Jews with their keen intelligence. The Romans knew how to make them keep their mouths shut. The prophets were dead and

gone. Grief, subdued hate, choked-down aspirations had pressed against the forcibly closed mouth and seemingly broken its moorings. Denied a voice politically, they had swallowed their degradation and kept the bursting bag closely tied—and thus developed a terrible apparatus with which to cry “Crucify Him”—and to spit.

The Irish had also such huge jaws and mouths, but their noses were next to nothing. They, too, were in political bondage and, as they had nearly always been so, they had failed to grow noses, just mouths. But the Hebrew nose had held its own, glory to Moses and the prophets!

A bursting bag tied down—yes, that was the cause of such protruding mugs.

Amused by his own reflections, the pastor again paced up and down the room, but finally made another pause before the picture:

Yes, Christ and Pilate belonged to another race—or type, he corrected himself. Pilate represented the civil state in its highest potency—the world empire, the ruling, the organizing principle. Christ also represented an empire, a kingdom, in its highest potency, that “which is found within you,” the most powerful of all kingdoms. The one represented order and power and civil justice, the other grace and love. Roman power had to be crushed, but it had given to the world a solid foundation for a well ordered political state and for civil laws. Christ had to suffer an ignominious death, but He gave us eternal life and salvation thru faith in Him, His death, and resurrection to righteousness. The world had never attained higher types than these.

He walked to and fro for a while, but again returned to the picture.

They should have been standing together, those

two, against the mob. Pilate appears to be perplexed, and Christ looks grave. The situation had made a different appeal to each of them. Pilate was groping for something which Jesus knew, or rather which Jesus Himself was. "What is truth?" he asked, not knowing that Jesus was the truth. They should have come to an understanding, these two—against the mob. Pilate should have made common cause with Christ, for he had the power.

He paced the floor, but stopped abruptly.

What would have been the fate of the crowd, the men with the protruding mouths and jaws, if Pilate and Christ had come to an understanding?

How about that person Conrad Walther Welde? How about all those in bondage whom Christ had come to set free with His death and resurrection?—A Christianity without the cross, but with Latin law books—and lances.

Why, yes—even that had been tried.

It was those with the protruding mouths that Christ had come to save! With them He had spent His time, and from them He had chosen His apostles.

"That which was lost," that was what He had come to save—that for which the Roman empire cared nothing.

Pastor Welde's cigar was forgotten. Slowly he drew near the window and gazed for a long time at the lilac bushes in bloom. Jorgina had wanted to put a bouquet of them on his table, but he detested cut flowers. They reminded him of funerals, but he gave of these flowers generously to others.

CHAPTER II

Pastor Welde had known since his earliest childhood that he would become a minister, or had at least heard it from many others. This had placed a damper on his spirits while at play, so that he had, as a rule, been satisfied to watch the other children without taking any part in their games himself. To him some children were good and others were bad. Those who were bad often caused the games to break up and end in quarrels and even in fights, and when this occurred, it fell to his lot to establish peace. That he was the son of a minister gave him authority; and he was large and well built, so that when called upon to separate two who were settling their differences in a fist fight, he would frequently forget himself and handle them so roughly that they would unite in a counter-attack upon him. Big and good-natured as he was, he would, as a rule, simply hold the two belligerents off at a safe distance and let them bite and scratch until they were exhausted. If they grew too aggressive, he might throw them and hold them down for a while, but he could not beat them. He would afterwards seek to regain their favor and attempt to coax them back into good humor, but became in turn the object of their deepest contempt in spite of his superior physical strength.

His father was a man of few words, and had received his academic training in Norway; a man with a deep, refined nature, who had crossed the ocean to cast his lot with his countrymen in their new home as soon as he learned that they were in crying need of spiritual guidance. On the other hand, the field was greatly overcrowded in Norway. He felt this as his call,

and one day he and his young wife set sail for the new country amid much weeping and lamentations at the pier. It was his wife's relatives who gathered for a demonstration against such an outrage. They were people of importance—some of the men wearing officers' uniforms, and holding high political offices in a city on the coast. Amid the rustling of silken draperies, indignant tears were shed into dainty, perfumed handkerchiefs. Had the aunts but known that Johan Welde contemplated anything like going to America, they would surely have prevented the alliance. Poor little Laura would now in all likelihood be scalped by the Indians or made to suffer at the stake. They had all read "The Pathfinder" and others of Cooper's Indian tales, and knew what was in store. To think that Welde could do a thing like that!

But on deck stood the "poor little Laura," pitying the aunts because they pitied her. She had begun to breathe more freely as soon as she came aboard. She had not understood quite all that Welde had told her about the necessity of having someone from home to look after the spiritual needs of the emigrants, that they might stick to their church and religious traditions and not get adrift amid the new conditions; and her relatives had not understood any of it, but she knew that her husband was right. She could see it in the very gleam of his eye, the expression about his mouth, the outlines of his figure, and the waves of his hair. She could see it in the way he squared his massive shoulders when he had his back turned, and in his firm stride when he walked; and she would gladly have followed him to the ends of the earth. Should one like him wrestle with other candidates for an appointment as pastor's assistant there at home? One like him? Not much!

They found their field of labor in Wisconsin. A

little house had been built for them, consisting of only one room partitioned by a curtain. On one side of the curtain were the parlor, the study, and the bedroom, while on the other the livingroom, diningroom, and kitchen. The minister made book shelves under the ceiling from rough boards, and these were filled with books in Morocco adorned with red and green vignettes, and theological works in black and gold. Here he prepared his sermons with the greatest care. He could not have put more work on them even if they had been intended for a metropolitan congregation. Into this room the farmers came for advice and to discuss the affairs of the church, the poor to receive help, and the rich their admonition, while sorrowful and sin-burdened souls came for consolation. And all who came were invited over to the other side of the partition for a cup of Mrs. Welde's coffee. The parson's cultured little wife strove hard not to give offence with her refined manners, for there were a few formidable dames among the women of the church who gave her to understand that in this country all are just "common people." But when the wee little wife of the parson, in her effort to give a full measure of service, finally presented her husband with a son weighing fifteen pounds, then her position was secure.

The minister would often have to travel forty or fifty miles over bad roads to reach his scattered flocks, while his wife remained in the little log cabin alone with the little boy and listened to the splashing of the rain and the roar of the wind, and thought of her husband who was out in the storm. At such times she gave the Lord many a promise on condition that her husband should return home in safety, and the promise most frequently given was that her boy should enter His service when he grew up. She kept a light in the window and used fuel unsparingly, but

when the tramp dog, a stray mongrel, who had chosen the parsonage as his home, began to bark, and she heard the sound of horses' hoofs and saw the glow of the minister's pipe in the distance, and when he himself soon after came trudging in, rain-soaked or half-frozen, but safe and sound and cheerful, all her anxiety was forgotten. On his return he would often bring with him a sack of potatoes or a piece of bacon, or even a dressed calf that the farmers had given him. He learned to appreciate such evidences of spiritual life in the members of his flock. They meant more to him than weeping testimonies. A greater willingness to give—that was something tangible. And a large share of what was thus given to him was in turn given to the poor families who had recently settled there as immigrants.

During those first years Mrs. Welde often heard from her aunts in the old country. Her own letters were overflowing with happiness, but she did not conceal from her folks that she and Pastor Welde were poor and lived like other people in a new settlement, where poverty was the usual condition. After that it was the aunts who busied themselves by scalping "poor little Laura."

In the meantime Welde's church grew, the work expanded, and his life was made easier. A beautiful parsonage was erected near his largest church, in which he could receive his people, and his wife had her "parlor" like the well-to-do farmers' wives in the neighborhood. But she never forgot those first trying years when she, in spite of everything, had been so happy. Her husband was as yet always occupied, but so little was required of her now. He alone made sacrifices. So she thought—and in his study sat her husband and brooded over the good old days when he was permitted to make sacrifices. Now he lived in

ease and grew stout, while his wife sacrificed herself thru the increased care of a larger household. And each felt envious of the other.

Such were the conditions under which Conrad Walther Welde had grown to manhood.

Even while they still lived in the log cabin he had been led to realize that his lot was easy, while nearly everyone else suffered hardships. His parents often spoke of how heartless the farmers were in the treatment of both their children and their animals; of how filthy they sometimes were, and how poorly they managed their affairs. They would speak of how, if the farmers would only be a little considerate, they might make life so much easier for each other, and how they suffered from the consequences of their own bad temper and actions. This was never breathed outside of the walls of the little cabin, but the boy saw his mother's tears and his father's indignation, and this was stored up in his memory.

He was happy now that the goal had been reached and he had been called to a church of his own. His father's position in the Synod as well as his own reputation had secured for him what was considered to be one of the most prosperous churches to be had. The president of the Synod had congratulated him upon having been called to serve a church where everything was so well organized, and all seemed in readiness for him. Conrad Welde had squared his powerful shoulders at this. He would have gone just as willingly to a new mission field in the West or in Canada.

He had been well received and had found the work in good condition. He felt conscious of a certain helplessness, especially when he remembered his able predecessor, but he was happy in his work. It was a blessed moment for him when he conducted the ser-

vice before the altar, the well-trained chorus leading the responses so that the church seemed to vibrate with powerful harmony. There he felt perfectly self-confident, his soul was gripped and carried to sublime heights. The congregation seemed to vanish as it were: he was the mediator between it and God. He prepared his sermons with great care, lest he might put into them something of his own. Only the Word of God, free from all man-made rhetoric, was what he desired to preach.

It had all been so full of promise, and the work seemed to make great progress. But a shadow had suddenly fallen across his path, the shadow of a raw-boned, shabbily dressed man with a bent back and a sparse beard, a man to whom he in some inexplicable manner owed a satisfaction; one who had a claim against him which he was unable to pay.

CHAPTER III

Pastor Welde was walking back and forth in his office in a very satisfied frame of mind. Jorgina had been completely vanquished the previous day, had had glowing coals heaped upon her head by his request for an additional cup of coffee. Today she had been unusually amiable. He chuckled to himself thru the cigar smoke. A diplomat, that's what he was. He should have been minister to Russia or some other cantankerous country and averted war.

By right he should have stood on his dignity and done what another would have done in his place: shown the presumptuous person out of the room and proceeded to drink tea; but his large body was but poorly trained for any kind of physical retaliation. As a boy he had been strong for his age, and things that he picked up were apt to break in his hands. If he slapped the younger children or took hold of them in any way, he would always be too rough. "Conrad, now you must be careful!"—He could still hear his mother's voice. It used to indicate all the varying degrees from a mild admonition to a threat which meant a whipping when his father came home. If she emphasized "now," it was a warning in the third degree; an accent on "you" placed it in the second degree; one on "careful" meant the first degree; while an accented "must" was a threat in the second, but an even stress on each word was unquestionably a threat in the first degree. And thus he had learned to be careful. He never dared to strike back even if a couple of angry little fellows jumped at him, as he could not bear the thought that they might get hurt. But he noted with a certain satisfaction that he had

been shown considerable respect by some little rowdies who had used both rocks and sticks and who were jubilant whenever they succeeded in hitting their mark.

He also recalled how they had been after him at college to join the football team. They had felt of the muscles of his legs and pinched him in various places and prophesied that he would be a star. He had himself believed that he might be good for something like that had it only not been required of him that he should knock others down and run across their bodies, perhaps breaking their arms and legs, and listen to the applause of the crowd when he waded thru opponents. Those things were evidently not in his line.

"That is right, my boy," an old minister had once said to him while on a visit at the home of his parents, "Jesus never did strike back, and you wish to be like Him, do you not?" He had nodded his head at this—hypocrite that he felt himself to be. With him it was not piety as much as cowardice. His playmates were too frail for rough handling, he imagined, but they were not much hampered by frailties when they could be up to tricks. One childhood incident after another passed before his mind. They certainly had deserved a whipping. Well, they did get whipped anyway, poor fellows! On Sunday mornings he had heard them howl, as it was generally on Sunday mornings that the parents had time to attend to that part of their parental duties, and both parents and children would arrive at church with their faces reflecting their newly acquired righteousness!

Pastor Welde yawned and stretched himself to his full height, and swung his arms by way of gymnastics. He felt as tho he would like to fight something. He ought to get a punching-bag, something to pound with

all his might, something that would neither cry out nor crumble when he struck hard. Or something to lift or pull at. There are so many objects of this kind.

A noise in the kitchen attracted his attention. It was from an armful of wood which Jorgina dumped into the woodbox. What if he went out and filled the woodbox for her? He felt willing even to pay for the privilege of doing it, but what would she say? That would naturally depend upon what Pastor Wangel of the Synod and Pastor Nelson of the United Church would have done under similar circumstances. He pondered a while. Jorgina had to be handled carefully, diplomatically. While he was speculating on this, he heard another rumble. Armful number two. No use now, the woodbox was already full.

He paced back and forth for a while, then threw the half-smoked cigar into the fire and opened the door out upon the porch to air the room. Then he put on his black coat and sat down at his desk, as it was time for his study hours. Noticing a spot on his coat sleeve, he began to rub it vigorously. He had a passion for removing stains. He then bowed his head and said the Lord's Prayer in silence. His study hours were part of his professional duties. Now he was the pastor in his official capacity.

CHAPTER IV

Jorgina was bustling about in the front room, dusting the furniture. Everything had to be immaculate. That was the way it had been at Wangel's, of the Synod, and at Nelson's, of the United Church. She then retired to the kitchen, where she kept the brightly polished coffee-pot steaming hot. The minister himself received those who made calls.

He helped them remove their outer garments and talked about the weather, then led them into his study or found them places to wait in the front room if the study was occupied. Those who were in very much of a hurry had their business attended to in the hall. He always seemed to have time for everybody.

One woman came to arrange for a christening, then another, and still another. That never took very long, and after the necessary arrangements had been made he would usher them into the kitchen, where Jorgina was ready to tell them about the two kinds of coffee, guide them into a true appreciation of the correct kind, and receive their thanks as they passed down the kitchen steps.

Then a laboring man came, bringing a petition for a job as janitor at one of the schools, which he wanted the minister to sign. He came holding a button in his hand, which had come off when he unbuttoned his coat on the stairs to get out his papers so as to have them in readiness. Like all everyday people he began talking first about the thing that had last happened. The minister examined the button and the place where it had been fastened. "I'll sew this on for you in less than a minute," he said. "I am a

bachelor, you know, and have had considerable experience in this line."

The man protested vigorously. His wife could do it.

"But I want you to get this button fastened so it will stay," the minister laughed. "It takes a six-year college course to learn to sew on a button decently."

At last the man laughingly pulled off his coat and revealed a pair of very dirty shirt-sleeves. Before handing over the coat he took out a package of tobacco done up in yellow paper and also a charred corn-cob pipe and glanced furtively about the room. The minister got up and brought a box of cigars. There were two boxes. One, a genuine Havana, he handed him. The man took it and turned it around with his rough fingers. "Much obliged," he finally said. The minister gave him a light and pushed out the best chair for him, then found a needle and thread in a drawer in his desk. "This is a secret," he explained, "the housekeeper is somewhat old and her eye-sight is failing, so I have these things here without her knowing anything about it." He was slightly near-sighted and had to get the right focus before he could thread the needle. "We will now proceed with this important piece of tailoring," he said with a professional air as he spread out the coat. The man had wrapped himself in a cloud of smoke and sat bending forward with his hands between his knees and doing some thinking of his own. The minister surely meant business by all this.

"I don't belong to the church," he said, "but I have thought of joining. One sort of ought to belong somewhere in that line," he added philosophically.

The pastor did not answer. He seemed absorbed in his work. The visitor was perplexed:

"I have thought a good deal of sending the kids

to Sunday School," he continued, "my woman has said to me, time and again she has said: 'John,' says she—

The doorbell rang, and the minister laid the coat aside and left the room. There was quite a fuss in the hall. The chug-chug of an automobile could be heard outside.

Banker Brooten and Dr. Spohr entered. They were in high spirits and pushed each other into the room. Like one perfectly at home, Mr. Brooten picked up the minister's cigar box and passed it around. His presence seemed to fill the whole office.

"Be seated, gentlemen," the minister said, "I'll soon be at liberty." They could scarcely believe their eyes when they saw him pick up the coat and begin to sew. Their glances passed from the minister to the laborer and back again. Then the doctor burst out laughing. "I never saw the like," he said, "are you a tailor, too?" The minister joined in the laugh. "I merely wanted to show him that a Lutheran minister can sew on a button so it will stay," he said, pulling quite hard at the thread.

"I never saw the like," Brooten, too, exclaimed. "But then," he added, "you are not the only one." And he turned up the edge of his vest and tugged at a button on his trousers. "I have fastened this on myself," he said, "and I can actually feel how the whole weight of my whole trousers rests on this one button."

They all laughed; but the laborer was ruminating. In his home it was always his wife who sewed on the buttons.

"I have a weakness with regard to buttons," Pastor Welde said, as he wound the thread around the button and fastened the end on the under side. "But there is another button missing, so I had better put one there at the same time," and he searched in a box for a button to match.

"You seem to have everything right a hand," laughed Brooten.

"Why, yes," the minister answered with a smile, "I think a person should always take care of his buttons. My grandmother had a collection of them consisting of several boxes, part of which were brought over from Norway. I expect to fall heir to them some day."

They all laughed boisterously.

"Well, they might come in handy and be of great use for a minister," the doctor began. "When you see, for instance, one who comes to Communion unworthily, with a missing button, all you need to do is to say: 'Pst!' and beckon him into the vestry and sew the button on for him and he will be truly prepared!"

Again their laughter filled the room.

"It is not altogether laughable either," the minister said. "My mother's people in Norway were of what they styled 'the better class,' and when my grandmother came over to live with us, her buttons were just about all that remained of her family grandeur. But in my opinion grandmother's buttons did more to keep the Willow Prairie Church together during the time of the great church controversy than all my father's syntax. Father was a theologian from Norway, as you know, and in spite of being such a kind and good man as he was, there always remained a touch of the dictator about him; but the women of the church came to grandmother to get buttons from her, 'of the same kind,' they would say. And she could always find some that resembled the ones that were lost. In her collection were silver buttons which had been worn by a powerful landowner, her paternal grandfather. There were brass buttons bearing the design of a crown, which had been worn by her other

grandfather, who had been a general in the army. She had buttons from her own father's uniform, and buttons bearing all manner of insignia. While she was sorting out the plainer buttons she was elaborating on the family history; the 'farmers' wives went home deeply impressed. Added to her own collection was my mother's of a later date, and the Welde family was spread about the settlement with the buttons. Farmers and farmers' wives were wearing buttons that had been worn by the Weldes, and had they not remained faithful to Pastor Welde's party the buttons would have become almost worthless."

He smiled half sadly as he continued: "Grandmother belonged to one of those old aristocratic families which finally lost everything. All she had left was her buttons. She brought them out and looked at them and fondled them so many a time when she felt sad, and she enjoyed telling about the silk gowns and the red patent-leather slippers and the gay little parties of her childhood."

The buttons were at last sewed on and the laborer's petition signed. Brooten also placed his name there with an air that seemed intended to convey to the man what that really meant. Welde went with him out into the hall. The man seemed dazed. "I do not belong to the church," he began again, "but I have thought of"—then he remembered that he had said the same thing before. "My woman has been saying time and again that we must send the kids to Sunday School." Suddenly he remembered that he had said that also. "I am rather handy with things around the house," he began, "so that if the minister has any little jobs that need to be done, any wood to be sawed or anything like that, I'd be glad to come over and do it, evenings or Sundays—." Then he remembered that it was not considered right to do those things on

Sundays, and remained irresolute standing in the doorway. "I have sometimes taken a drink," he tried next, "but I'll quit, and I have been swearing, too. That is an awful habit, but after this—."

The minister pushed him out gently without listening further to his protestations and dismissed him with a movement of the hand. "If you get that job," he said, "you must conduct yourself in such a manner that we who signed your petition will have no reason to regret our having helped you."

The door was closed, but the man was still standing outside with his shapeless hat in his hand. Then he felt of his buttons, straightened himself up, and went into the nearest saloon to tell about his experience and to get more signatures.

When Rev. Mr. Welde returned to his study, he found the doctor over by the book-case and Brooten standing near the window.

"The poor fellow evidently thought that it was for the sake of saving his soul that I did him that little favor," he said, "but had I known that—."

"You would have let his 'woman' sew on his buttons for him, would you not?" interrupted Brooten.

"Most assuredly! There are some who consider a minister of the Gospel to be just an ordinary business man. They simply cannot imagine anyone doing them any service unless there is some hidden motive for it, some form of self-seeking," the minister answered. And then he added as if apologetically: "But that is the way they have been brought up. It is quite a risky matter to offer anyone any kind of help. I remember when I was in St. Louis to polish up on my German, and, of course, my theology also, that I was out one evening, and when crossing a bridge I saw an old, feeble woman carrying a basket of potatoes. She was struggling along with it, shuffling

and panting and changing it from one hand to the other. When I had watched her for a while, I thought what a shame it was for a big fellow like myself not to carry the basket for her as I was going in the same direction. So I took hold of her basket and tried to be as pleasant as possible to her; but what do you suppose she did? She seized the handle of the basket with both hands and held on to it and screamed at the top of her voice. She thought that I would run away with her potatoes. I tried both English and German, but she understood neither. She only jammed her toothless gums together and held the basket like this," and he demonstrated her grip on the basket by taking hold of Brooten's arm until the portly banker both laughed and squirmed. "Then in a minute," he continued, "a crowd had collected, and strangely enough, there did not seem to be one person who believed me when I tried to explain matters. They would in all probability have thrown me into the river had they not felt that it was wisest to let a big fellow like me off with a good scare. But, now, it is really sad that such conditions exist. How harshly the world must have dealt with a woman before she could get that way."

Brooten had grown serious. "I have also, at least formerly, upon occasions, tried to help people, but if you are not careful, my dear sir, they will actually take advantage and fly up at you. The best way is to let people take care of themselves; that is what I have had to do. That is perhaps, too, the reason why it is so easy to raise money for the heathens. If you give the Hottentots a lift you will never have them hanging around your office for all time afterwards pestering you. If you stoop to tie a shoestring for a certain class of people, they will invariably take it to be an invitation for them to wipe their feet on you.

Yes, sir, that is what they will do. You don't get much thanks for it, but you may get a little mud thrown at you instead. Isn't that so, Spohr?"

The doctor nodded to him from his place near the book case. As Brooten was talking, he was busy polishing his fingernails. Theodora, the oldest daughter, was forever giving advice about his nails.

Now, then, as to his errand. He had come expressly to invite the minister for an auto-ride the following day. Had just ordered a fine machine from Detroit. It seemed that one had to indulge in such new-fangled follies nowadays. It was principally Mrs. Brooten and the girls that had insisted on it. Had a good chauffeur, really an expert. Now was the time to enjoy it—in a few years autos would be common.

The banker and the physician took a rather hasty leave as the door bell rang. The new caller was a woman of the middle class, with whom they all shook hands very cordially, and upon inquiry found that all the members of her family were well.

Mrs. Andrew Thompson's plump little person was placed in a chair which the pastor very courteously offered her. She opened her bag carefully and took out a very neatly folded handkerchief, raised her veil and wiped her merry little nose. All this took time. She had always talked to the old pastor as a daughter would, and he had been like a father to her. At this thought the handkerchief had to be brought up to the eyes. The new minister was so young and appeared so embarrassed that she felt that she could almost address him as a son, but thought herself scarcely old enough for that. She had been compelled to drop one role without having been assigned to another; but the minister's kind inquiry as to whether there was anything that he could do for her, soon set them both at ease.

Really, the pastor had to pardon her for coming, but it was about this lutefisk supper that the ladies' aid society was going to give. She was supposed to be president of the society, had been opposed to it herself, but had been almost forced into accepting the office, tho there were so many who were more competent than she, and then, besides that, she had all her little ones to take care of—the youngest was only two and a half.

The minister interrupted her by saying that he had heard that she was the best worker in the women's aid society. This was stoutly denied by Mrs. Thompson herself, as there was, for instance, Mrs. Berven, who had recently come over from Norway.

When she mentioned Mrs. Berven, she made a slight pause and made use of her handkerchief again. She would have given a great deal to have known Pastor Welde's personal opinion of Mrs. Berven, but he pretended not to hear.

Then, more directly: "Well, the pastor no doubt knows Mrs. Berven?"

"Hm, yes,—no, well, I have no doubt seen her. She is rather small and dark, I believe, with a sharp nose—."

"You mean a sharp tongue." This came abruptly, her handkerchief suspended half way up to her nose as if detained by an invisible hand.

The pastor laughed good-naturedly. "Perhaps so. I do not know her myself. It is Jorgina and Mrs. Brooten and several others whom I have heard mention you in such laudatory terms."

Mrs. Thompson seemed entirely won over by this admission. Jorgina and Mrs. Brooten were the very ones whose opinion she valued most highly. She then explained her chief errand. She had been out selling tickets for the supper until she did not know

what Andrew, her husband, would say, altho he never used to say anything when she was working for the church. She had practically had to take over the whole charge of this lutfisk supper, and if only all the other women would help her, she felt certain that they would have a good crowd. She had sold over fifty tickets already and had been promised coffee at Holm's grocery and cream from Olson's, and the Dane, Jensen, had promised her sugar and butter. One of the women in the society had agreed to bake the "lefse," and she had secured the promise of twenty-eight cakes, but wanted at least twelve more. She could think of nothing worse than to run short of anything at a supper. She also intimated that some women brought cakes that were not fit to be placed before people. Of course it was not right of her to talk about others—but that last social at the parish house—the one that Mrs. Berven had managed—well, she had felt so mortified! She herself always planned to leave the cakes that did not look very nice to the last, and if any were left over there were plenty of poor people who were glad to get them, but some of the women always managed so that the best cakes were left over, and it was not the poor that got them either!

The minister listened to her very attentively. But having been brought up in a parsonage, he was too well versed in the practical side of church work to underestimate the value of a member like Mrs. Thompson. It was just such women as she who filled the depleted church treasuries. She was known as the most energetic and self-sacrificing woman in his church.

"Perhaps I talk too much," she said, as her eyes rested for the twentieth time on the spool of thread and the button box on the table.—Black linen thread?

Dear me! Wasn't Jorgina even able to sew buttons on the minister's clothes?

"My dear Mrs. Thompson, talk as much as you like," he said genially. "You are one of my most patient listeners when I preach on Sundays. Since I came here you have always been in your place in church."

Her face took on a devout expression. A woman was not able to accomplish very much, but if they all worked together, it would count up. "But," with a sigh, "there are always a few who have to do everything."

The minister was called to the door, and Mrs. Thompson made use of the time in examining the room more closely. Jorgina was certainly a neat housekeeper, not a speck of dust to be seen anywhere. She wondered if the minister knew anything about the surprise party that was planned for him the following evening. She almost had a desire to tell him just to spite Mrs. Berven. There that she-devil had gone to work to get up a party for the minister when she knew that Mrs. Thompson was busy with the supper. It made her so angry to think of what could have been done had there only been a little more time so that one thing had not been piled right on top of the other, the way it had been done. Well, things had to take their own course now. The minister seemed to be nice, a very nice man, but he was different from the old minister. There was something aristocratic about Welde, and yet on the other hand he was so plain and frank, too, that one never thought of how much of an aristocrat he really was.

Pastor Welde returned, and Mrs. Thompson divulged her real mission. She had come to see if Jorgina could help her a little. Jorgina was so neat and cleanly, and so very competent. There was so much work in connection with that lutefisk and

she could not very well sell tickets and attend to everything else. Now, if the pastor—that is, provided Jorgina herself was willing—could persuade her to help a little with the lutefisk, she knew she could manage the rest herself. But it would be better if the minister would talk to her himself and not let on that she had spoken to him about it. Old people were rather difficult to deal with in such matters. The minister agreed with her in this and was going to show her right into the living room from the office so that she might get a chance to talk to Jorgina, but Mrs. Thompson did not let on that she noticed this and went into the hall and rapped on the door. It would not do to let Jorgina know that she had been in the study first. That might spoil everything.

When she had gone a man came to see the pastor about the place as janitor at the school. He was a quiet, sober working man, one of the most honest and exemplary members of the church. He said that he needed just that kind of a job. His wages at the mill were insufficient, and he had had considerable sickness in his family. Besides, he had noticed lately that he could not stand outdoor work in the winter time much longer. He knew that he could do the work that was required, and it would be a great help if he could get the job. He and his wife had prayed about it together, and their youngest boy had prayed the Lord the evening before to please let his father get that job. If the pastor would be so kind as to make out a petition for him and sign his name and also get a few others to sign, he felt sure that he would get it. The man's honest brown eyes were turned appealingly to the face of his pastor. But Welde was silent. Only a moment ago he had signed a petition for another man, a perfect stranger, one who thought that he had helped him only for the sake of getting him to join

the church. Why had he not shown him the door? But perhaps it could yet be straightened out. As soon as his study hours were over he would go and see Brooten. It might not yet be too late. So he gave the man his hand and said: "It is possible that something may be done, but if you fail it will be my fault. But I will try to help you in some way if I can."

The man was twirling his cap between his hands, and his face showed his inner struggle. "Yes, yes," he said, "it is in God's hands. But what do you think I can say to my wife and to our youngest boy when I get home? Is there any hope at all, do you think?"

It was as tho he begged for his life. Pastor Welde could feel his heart pound. Perhaps something could yet be done. He could not let the man go away without any hope, so he said: "I acted foolishly, but you may feel sure that if it is within human power to get you a position, either this or some other similar work, I shall certainly do it."

"Thanks! I thank you ever so much!" His voice was scarcely audible.

When he left, Pastor Welde stood watching him go. He was deeply moved. It was as tho he had done the man an injury, and he felt that the man himself also looked at it in that light. He walked back and forth in his study, and then, looking at his watch, said to himself that in another half hour he would be on his way to Brooten. Perhaps he could help him.

A woman came next. She threw herself down in a chair and began telling that she was so unhappy, that she did not know what she should do. She had prayed and prayed, but her cross was so hard to bear.

Pastor Welde asked sympathetically what her trouble was.

"My husband will not let me love Jesus," she said. It came with the force of an explosion and was followed

by a torrent of words: "He will not let me pray, nor sing, nor read God's Word, nor praise my Lord and Savior. I don't know what I shall do," and she rambled on.

She was young and quite handsome, and the flood of tears which accompanied her words made the minister feel ill at ease. "Oh, but my good woman," he said, "you must not carry on like this. It may come out alright. It surely will come out alright. My dear woman, you must—." She grew hysterical and began to call out:

"Oh, Savior, help me, help me!"

The minister was afraid she might faint, and he fidgetted helplessly about and asked if he might not give her some water, and at once poured her a glass from a pitcher. She panted like a child who has had a crying spell, and he first thought that he would call Jorgina, but then he asked her to get up and he led her to the door out upon the porch, thinking that she might sit out there and get some fresh air. She was still panting. "Sit down out here," he said gently, and as he caught sight of the lilacs, he continued: "Sit down and look at my flowers. Pick all you like, and you must try to be patient with your husband. What God has joined together He will not put asunder. You must try to love Jesus in such a way that your husband also will learn to love Him."

"No, no," she wailed, "he only gets worse and worse." At this she again burst into tears and threw herself against the minister as tho she were at the point of falling. He got the impression of something soft, flabby, and repulsive leaning on him. He led her back into the room and got her to sit down. He tried to overcome his feeling of disgust and endeavored to give her some consolation. He said: "Is your husband unkind to you?"

"No, no," she said, "he is as kind and good a man as anyone can be, but he will not listen to me."

"Well, can't you stop troubling him, then?"

"No, I can't," she sobbed.

The minister went over to the door and called Jorgina. "You will have to take charge of this woman," he said. "I have come to the same conclusion as her husband, I will not listen to her," he added to himself with an unaccustomed harshness in his voice.

When Jorgina entered the room, the woman revived in a remarkably short time, and soon swept out of the house with an air as if she were on her way to a bargain sale. But she was angry with the minister—she, perhaps the only one in the whole rotten church who had found Jesus—to be treated like that!

Without waiting for his supper, Pastor Welde started out to find Mr. Brooten and speak to him about that vacant janitor job. He found him in his garden and opened the subject immediately. He had gathered that the person whose petition they had signed in his study that day was a drinking man, and now there was Thorvald Larson—Mr. Brooten surely knew him—who also wanted the place. He repeated what Larson had said about his health and his and his wife's prayers and about the little boy. He talked himself warm. "I feel that Larson is the man who ought to get that place, and we should have helped him instead of the other one. You are a business man and know all about these things and you can surely find a way out of this. I did not know that the first man drank, and I depended on your judgment."

Brooten was chewing at his meerschaum thoughtfully. "I knew mighty well what I was doing," he said. "That man has a good standing in the biggest lodge in the city, the Woodmens', and they patronize our bank. He has considerable political influence in

his ward, and especially among the class with which you and I have no influence whatever—the saloon element. I can do nothing for Larson now; that is utterly impossible. He is a good enough man, a very good man for that matter, but he never gets anywhere. He is always struggling with poverty and sickness and complaints of all kinds, and does not have any influence at all. I guess we have to let it stand as it is.”

“Then I must see what I can do alone,” the minister said firmly.

“All right, go ahead and make a fool of yourself!” Brooten said with a slight sneer, “but remember that your name is on that petition together with mine—and when your name is no longer there, mine will remain there alone, instead of both names being together.”

“But we ought to recommend the best man of the two.”

“The man I recommend is always the best man.”

“You mean the best man for you.”

“Exactly.”

“Well, you will kindly pardon me if I go and make a fool of myself by trying to do what I consider to be the right thing.”

“Well, yes, if you consider it right to go back on your own signature, there is nothing more to do about that.”

Welde was already at the end of the garden path.

“Goodbye, Mr. Brooten!”

“Good luck to you, Welde,” and the banker’s broad figure began mounting the steps to the house.

Pastor Welde then went to the school commissioner for the ward, to present his cause. He was a German, a former saloonkeeper, who was now conducting a real estate business and was trying to gain recognition among the better element of the city. To this

end his election to the office of school commissioner had helped considerably. He was very glad to see the minister, and became even more pleased when Welde spoke to him in the German language. Welde explained the situation, and the commissioner was himself of the opinion that a drinking man ought not to get the appointment as janitor. He was very accommodating. Pastor Welde's refined manners and his perfect German impressed him, and he had, in fact, been wondering if it was good policy to employ as janitor one who was a toper, considering what his own occupation formerly had been. It seemed to have penetrated his muddled brain that in order to rehabilitate himself he needed the support of the minister, and he readily promised to put the matter before the board at its next meeting. The manner in which he gave this promise caused Pastor Welde to breathe a fervent prayer of thanksgiving on his way home.

On Main Street he met the man who had first come to speak to him about the janitor job. He was just coming out of a saloon and greeted the minister somewhat unsteadily. "Hello, hello, Mr. Welde! Say, that button is still there," he laughed hilariously. "I intend to join the church—yes I do—one ought to belong somewhere—I have promised, and I never go back on my words—and the kids—."

"Do you still have that paper?" the minister asked.

"Yes, sir—right here, sir," and he pulled the petition out of his pocket and slapped the minister familiarly on the shoulder with it. "Them buttons," he began again, "them there buttons, well, I've got to laugh."

Pastor Welde opened the paper and found under his own and Brooten's name those of a number of saloonkeepers, who had also signed the petition. Quickly he took out his pencil and drew a line thru

his name, and folding the paper together handed it back to him.

"Much obliged, Pastor, much obliged," he said, "when I've said that I will join, why I will join—the devil!" he added, as he noticed that the minister already was some distance away.

Pastor Welde returned home weary. Jorgina began to set the table.

CHAPTER V

The large congregation had received the new minister with great anticipations. In common with most city churches it had an aristocratic clique, and these reckoned on him on account of his faultless manners, while those who felt themselves left out by the "swells," noted with satisfaction that he seemed to treat all alike. Then there was the liberal element, which had joined the church for business reasons or because they wished to support a church—and find support in it. A little religion did no harm, and attending church was considered respectable; but they did not wish to be hampered in any way by the church. The men visited the saloons and the women the theaters and the young people found their chief diversion at public dances. This element was very strong. Lastly there was the small band of "elect," who held their own prayer and testimonial meetings. The liberals counted on the minister because he had been seen with a cigar, and it had even been told that he had said he did not consider card playing as being more wicked than other social games, but the "elect" also counted on him. They had understood that he was one of them when they first heard him pray. To be sure, his sermons were written, but he did not lay all stress on faith and Baptism, as the old minister had done. He spoke more about the love of Jesus Christ and salvation for poor sinners, and this was a language that they understood, as perhaps none of the others could, they thought.

On Garfield Avenue a heated conflict was raging. It was an almost exclusively Norwegian district com-

posed of several streets and avenues known as "Garfield Avenue," because this was the name of the best street in the neighborhood, and here was the home of Mrs. Andrew Thompson and also of Mrs. Nels Berven, those who were well informed might have added.

At one time, half a score years ago, the street did not present such a respectable appearance. The houses were unpainted and the porches broken down, while here and there a broken window pane was stuffed with a thick, old-country sock. Fair-haired, dirty children were playing in the street, while women were leaning over the fences with which the Norwegians always surrounded their lots. The more dilapidated the house, the more solid the fence, that was almost a rule. If the men ever repaired anything about the place, it would be the fence, and if the children were ever punished for damaging anything, the fence was the cause of the trouble.

Then a day came when a newly married couple moved into one of the worst looking houses on the street. The wife was short and rather plump, but of a very active type. She came from Crawford County and was born in Wisconsin. She talked continuously, using English and Norwegian equally well, and this gave prestige in a street where most of the women spoke only Norwegian.

It caused a stir, and Andrew Thompson, the man, began to tear the fence down. At first they thought that he intended to repair it, but instead he tore it down and split it up into kindling wood, while his wife was with him and directed the proceedings. Later he brought some planks and replaced the broken boards in the sidewalk with new ones, also under his wife's direction. It made the neighbors talk. Mrs. Thompson had looked at the sidewalk of the neigh-

bor to her left, which was really dangerous to pedestrians, and the neighbor to the right noticed this and came over to call Mrs. Thompson's attention to the condition which she knew Mrs. Thompson had already noticed. The woman with the dilapidated sidewalk saw their glances, and that evening great plans were laid in the house to the left about building new sidewalks. Soon three women could get together to talk, and the talk spread, and there developed a movement toward better walks in the whole neighborhood. Then Andrew Thompson dug a deep pit at the back of his lot and gathered into it empty tin cans and broken bits of glass and china and old shoes and covered the refuse up. The neighbor at her left was on the watch, so that her husband could begin similar operations almost simultaneously. This angered the neighbor on the right, and she declared that she had intended doing the same thing for a long time, and on the following forenoon she raked her whole yard and made a huge bonfire where the children played while she was busy telling Mrs. Thompson that the women in the neighborhood were so "gossipy" that one had to be careful.

And they all learned to be careful. It is much more blessed to talk about other people's faults than it is to have one's own talked about; and it is well that it is so, for it is only when one's own windows are polished clean that one can talk effectively about the neighbor's dirty ones. Many sins are not reached by civil law, but gossip may be depended upon to serve as a court not to be despised. A sharp tongue does police duty in the back yards and the ballroom, and accomplishes more than its reputation gives it credit for. Woe to the street or the city where all are occupied only with their own affairs and where no one is roused to anger over the shortcomings of others and gives vent to his feelings in words.

Mrs. Thompson gained great prominence. When one of the women wanted to lecture a German or Irishman for his carelessness, she was always called upon and performed her mission admirably. She could shed tears over a bushel of bad potatoes that a German had delivered to a woman from Bergen who lived a block farther down the street, and now she had to officiate as interpreter. She could translate both words and tears in such a manner that her English was rather more vigorous than our original. There was a good deal of intelligence lying dormant in this street that neither the church nor society in general had made any use of, and it was this that Mrs. Thompson set in motion. The neighborhood got the reputation of being gossipy, and Mrs. Thompson became known as its worst gossip. They all deplored this and all condemned gossip, but the gossip went its way and improved the sidewalks and washed the windows and got the children christened and sent to school. The impelling motive was perhaps that "no one would have that to say," but the results to the windows and the children and the backyards were beneficial, and Garfield Avenue became one of the most respectable streets in the city. The houses were raised and good foundations were placed under them instead of decayed shingle blocks, and they were rebuilt and repainted. The saloon on Clifton's corner lost customer after customer, whereas, when Garfield Avenue emptied its Norwegian respectability into the church, the church was filled. If anything was wrong on Garfield Avenue, row upon row of pews remained empty. And the Norwegians on Garfield Avenue became a power to be reckoned with. The substantial buildings and the well kept lawns revealed nothing of the skillfully planned diplomacy that served to keep it all at such a high level. The women had be-

come so intelligent that they read from the real book of life, and the next door housewife was more interesting to them than W. J. Bryan or Theodore Roosevelt was to their husbands. A filthy or immoral home in the next block was of greater concern to the woman than the methods pursued by the Belgians in Congo, and she had the satisfaction of obtaining results from her anger, which was not always the case with her husband when he read the Chicago dailies. The women continued to hold supervision over each other, and if the men had done likewise they would perhaps have been still better off; but after a while the gossip took care of them also, and they entered grumbly the narrow path which leadeth to cleanliness, sobriety, and the prompt paying of bills.

If the church was to accomplish anything, Mrs. Thompson had to assume leadership. She worked so hard with socials and suppers in the ladies' aid society that there grew up considerable jealousy on the part of the others, but not enough to alter the fact that without Mrs. Andrew Thompson things never seemed to go quite right.

After a time a new family moved into the house across the street from Mrs. Thompson's. The moving van was scrutinized by sharp and experienced eyes as it came rolling up the street. They soon understood from the appearance of this load that hostilities would open. A new piano and a bundle of gray and frayed bedding and a worn-out washing machine, things that were new and things that were ready for the scrap heap, all thrown together. Had the woman known anything, she would have put a clean sheet around that bundle of bedding. There were cane-bottomed chairs with large holes in the seats, and an expensive leather rocker: poverty disguised in finery that it

could ill afford—would-be swells, that's what they were.

Mrs. Thompson watched her new neighbor closely from behind her curtained windows. She knew that their name was Berven, that the man had been a bookkeeper in Norway, and that they had come from Christiania and had lived for a while in Minneapolis. She knew Christiania people by reputation—short rations, and a showy appearance. But she would show them! The next wash day she put all the best underwear on the line and arranged the more expensive pieces so that the people across the street could not avoid seeing them. And she found that she had been right. The new woman across the street took down her clothesline and stretched it between the woodshed and the back porch so that Mrs. Thompson could not see the clothes she hung out. Yes, she had been right—they were just that kind of people. She found that she had to run over to Mrs. Berven's next door neighbor to borrow a pattern for a blouse for her little boy, and from the kitchen window over there she commanded a good view of Mrs. Berven's back yard. She certainly had been right—only rags, stockings with holes in them and underclothes worn to shreds, not a sign of mending anywhere. It was just as she had thought.

With the pattern in her hand she assured the neighbor that she could slip out thru the kitchen. That led her right past the Bervens' windows, and one glance showed her that their furniture was still standing about helter-skelter, the way the draymen had left it three days previously.

This first battle was fought like an engagement of artillery at long distance with no personal encounter or exchange of words. And on that washday invisible wires seemed to operate in the neighborhood, and all

the best clothes in every house were hung out on the line in such a position that the newcomer would be sure to see them. The husband of the neighbor on the left was a toper and the family very poor, but she hung out the neatly patched and mended underwear so that the garments flapped across Mrs. Berven's, and thus she joined the others in the demonstration.

Mrs. Berven flushed, then turned pale. She would not have been subjected to such treatment in the poorest quarters of Christiania. The frayed underwear on her line was besieged on all sides by respectable and even expensive garments. The condition of her husband's socks and her children's underwear seemed to accuse her. Her husband's drawers looked like Admiral Cervera's fleet after the battle of Santiago and bore a mute testimony to the fact that the owner sat too much and that his wife did not sit enough. Propriety and respectability fluttered from every clothesline and pointed their fingers at her, and well mended trousers kicked at her across the fences.

She had watched the woman across the street arrange her clothes so that the best pieces would be in plain view. It rained during the day so most of them left their clothes out over night, but Mrs. Berven gathered hers in a turbulent frame of mind. They should not gloat over her thus another day! She could dry her clothes in the kitchen.

The next day she was seen dressed to go out. She stopped at her gate. That she was waiting for someone was evident from the way she was glancing up and down the street and impatiently fastening her gloves. She wore a modish silk skirt and an elaborately embroidered blouse and carried her watch on a long chain around her neck. A big brooch was a prominent feature, but the most noticeable thing about her was her hat, a huge affair trimmed with two

long plumes. When the person or thing for which she apparently waited failed to appear, she began walking haughtily and with a lady-like sweep up the street, looking neither to right nor left. When she got out of sight of Garfield Avenue, she went into Brooten's bank, where her husband worked. While in the bank she grew suddenly ill and nearly fainted, so Mr. Brooten had to take her home in his car. Her husband also went with her. She was quite ill, but improved greatly when they drew near Garfield Avenue, and had nearly recovered when she stepped out of his car, her husband accompanying her into the house. Having gotten inside she was quite well, and said triumphantly: "Now, let the gossips have **that** for their trouble!" And when she later saw two or three of the women conversing together across their fences she felt perfectly well. After that she had no difficulty in getting acquainted. She was the first one in the street who ever rode in an automobile—and with the banker, too!

Time passed, and Mrs. Berven became a power in the neighborhood.

The ladies' aid society was going to serve a lute-fisk supper. The plan had originated with Mrs. Berven. In Minneapolis the church had given a lute-fisk and lefse supper which had netted over a hundred dollars. Everything that was Norwegian seemed to be in vogue. Mrs. Thompson did not have any particular love for lutefisk or lefse, and said so. This was America, and one could not very well set that sticky and ill-smelling dish before Americans and Germans, and she could not say that she thought lefse was so awfully good either. Her father, who had been raised in Norway, had spoken about lefse in such a way as tho he considered that one could both live and die

happily without it. But Mrs. Berven's followers had come to the aid meeting well prepared, and when she understood what the sentiment was, she had wisely seconded the motion to have such a supper. Mrs. Thompson was elected chairman as usual in a committee consisting of Mrs. Berven and half a dozen other women. It was really strange that it should turn out in this manner, for one would naturally have expected Mrs. Berven to have been elected chairman, as she was the one who had worked the hardest to have the plan adopted. But the committee was not chosen thoughtlessly as is often the case when men choose their committees. All former records were to be broken, and to this end all resources had to be utilized and a representation had to be secured from all the various elements in the congregation. With Mrs. Thompson and Mrs. Berven on the committee, the army from Garfield Avenue was marshalled and it was an army not to be lightly considered.

Mrs. Berven wept with vexation because Mrs. Thompson had been made chairman of the committee again. Even the new minister had learned to say "the competent and energetic Mrs. Thompson." But what did Mrs. Thompson know about lutefisk and lefse?

Yes, what did she know? Mrs. Berven asked herself this question again and again, and she thought of several other members of that committee about whom the same question might pertinently be asked. During the preliminary discussion it had been revealed quite clearly who the women were that did know something about it. Most of the members of the aid society came from small towns on the coast, where fish was eaten fresh, and lutefisk known only by name, while in the country districts the art of preparing lute-

fisk was common. A great plan dawned on her mind, but she had to go to work cautiously.

The woman from Bergen, who lived farther down the street, blurted it right out at the coffee table that afternoon when Mrs. Berven in a roundabout way had arrived at the conclusion that Mrs. Thompson would reap all the honor while the newer members would have to do the work.

"Let her do the work herself, and then bear the disgrace," she said, but Mrs. Berven tried to silence her and promised to help just the same. She herself would not be able to do anything at the time as she expected her sister from Chicago on a visit. At the same time she recalled the many humiliations which she had suffered at Mrs. Thompson's hands, and the tears fell so copiously that the woman from Bergen, half-blinded, dipped her toast on the side of her coffee cup, and she could scarcely stammer the "I'll tell you something," with which she introduced all her consolations.

Mrs. Berven was busy the following week. Many tears fell and much coffee was consumed.

Mrs. Thompson suspected no danger. She planned to sell fifty tickets for the supper herself, solicit all the cakes, and arrange for the lefse. When she did all this alone, it seemed only reasonable that the other members of the committee would see to having the lutefisk prepared. As chairman of the committee it was her duty to plan and distribute the work.

It was really funny, too. Now, when there was only two weeks left before the supper and she was ready to put her plan into operation, all the women wanted to sell tickets, they all wanted to solicit cakes, and most of them were willing to bake the lefse, if necessary, but not one of them was willing to prepare the lutefisk. Mrs. Berven expected her sister to come

on a visit from Chicago, and the fish had to be watched so carefully. Mrs. Olson had no cellar, and the woman from Bergen declared to high heaven that she did not dare to take such a grave responsibility upon herself. Others openly admitted that they knew nothing about lutefisk.

If only Mrs. Thompson had not repeated so often that she would have prepared the fish herself, only that she thought the others might do that when she did nearly everything else, it would not have been so bad, but she could not now come out and admit that she did not know how to do it. And, besides, she soon realized from what direction the wind blew. Mrs. Berven had made many trips the last few days, and it had not gone unobserved that the parcels she was carrying to give the impression she had been shopping, were the same ones, day after day. Mrs. Thompson realized that she had burned all her bridges behind her. There might be women in the church that were both willing and able to help her, but how could she come in touch with them without revealing her inability to cope with this lutefisk affair? It was just that very admission which Mrs. Berven and the woman from Bergen and others were waiting for, and it was in this pinch that she appealed to the minister and the minister's housekeeper, Jorgina.

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After leaving the pastor's study, Mrs. Thompson had a long conversation with Jorgina in the parsonage kitchen, and the talk drifted quite naturally to the lutefisk supper. Lutefisk and lutefisk were two different things, Jorgina explained. At Pastor Wangel's, of the Synod, they had the most perfect lutefisk, whereas at Pastor Nelson's, of the United Church—well, she simply could not describe it. "Mrs. Nelson had to have everything her own way, and the poor minister—."

"Maybe she left it too long in the lye-solution," Mrs. Thompson deftly interposed, "many do that, you know."

"Too long? Why, that would not make a particle of difference. All one has to do is to water it out if it gets too strong. That's easy."

Mrs. Thompson admitted this, but what she meant was that some women make the solution too strong. Jorgina, however, sniffed at this also. One could surely tell that the solution was too strong when it turned reddish? In that case one could thin it out, of course. No, the secret was, that at Wangel's they prepared their own lye. They poured water on hardwood ashes, that was all.

Mrs. Thompson fairly jumped in her chair. "Glory be!" She had learned that much. "Yes," she agreed heartily, "at home in Crawford County we never thought of such a thing as buying lye. We always made it ourselves. Anybody ought to know that much, but nowadays people are getting so that everything has to be bought at the store."

Jorgina also deplored this tendency, and the conversation was in danger of drifting into a new line. But Mrs. Thompson brought it back to where she wanted it by telling about a woman on Garfield Avenue who spoiled her fish by putting it in lye-solution before putting it in water. Jorgina laughed, and Mrs. Thompson gathered that it was a very foolish thing to do and began laughing herself so that she nearly spilled her second cup of coffee and had to set it down. Then she casually mentioned that the lady she had lived with in La Crosse let her lutefisk soak in water one whole week before putting it in the solution, that was the way she did.

"One week, oh, that is too much," Jorgina said.

"Why, yes," Mrs. Thompson agreed "I used to tell

her that three or four days was enough," and she felt relieved when Jorgina said that she would not think of soaking it for more than four days in water. It wasn't for nothing that Mrs. Berven had told her next door neighbor that she always soaked her fish over a week.

When Mrs. Thompson had succeeded in leading Jorgina to believe that she was well versed in the mysteries of lutefisk, it was comparatively easy to ask her to give the committee some assistance. Some women should not be allowed to handle food, they were so sloppy and careless. Some of the swell-est Americans in the city would be at the supper. But these women could poke around at home and be jealous and talk about other people, and especially about those who were no longer among the young. And Jorgina promised to help if the minister was willing to let her, but she was not quite sure of this, neither was Mrs. Thompson.

Mrs. Thompson went home with an air of victory. Even if Jorgina should fail her, she had found out enough about lutefisk to be able to go ahead alone, and Mrs. Berven would be left disgruntled after poking her long nose into it.

CHAPTER VI

It was early in the forenoon, and Pastor Welde slouched about in his room. He wore a green dressing gown with red silk cords. His hair was disheveled. He had not yet combed it. This was the happiest part of the day, before he dressed. With the morning toilet made, he was clergyman again. But as long as he was in his dressing gown and unkempt, he was an ordinary, free and independent human being, a Jack-of-all-trades in the house. He was a lover of books like his father, and now he was putting the books in order in the book shelf. Every time he got some new ones, a different arrangement was likely to take place. He already had an excellent library. He kept on moving books back and forth and put some pamphlets together. While doing this he hummed a song, to which he had set a kind of tune. It was a Danish folk-song that he had found in a song book translated into Norwegian dialect.

*Anon it is raining so sadly,
And it's dripping from tree and from grass;
Wind and stone, pine-branch lone have you wounded,
Your cloak is all tattered, alas!*

The last three lines of the verses, which are in a way an answer to the first four lines, he hummed in a lighter and livelier tempo:

*Let it rain, let it snow,
Let it storm, let it blow,
In my heart will your words ever glow.*

He had scarcely read the song more than once, but it had clung to him—or perhaps he to the song. And now it had a melody, tho he knew not where it came from:

*I can see by your eyes which are shining,
That you just went and wept bitter tears.
Wind and rain, grief in mind, tears in eyelids,
You who are so light-hearted and gay.*

Maggie, Maggie!—where was she now? Presumably she sat and painted in some studio in Paris and—someone else sat behind her with his eyes following the small dabs of color that the brush was applying to the canvas.

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*Every tear that did fall,
And the joy of it all,
You alone have the power to sway.*

It was rather strange how it came about. He remembered how he and two other students had gone to her studio to order a portrait painting of one of the professors who was soon to celebrate his twenty-fifth anniversary as a teacher. She was already well-known. He had later brought her the photographs, and he remembered how she had asked him to come and bring details about the professor's color of hair, complexion, etc. He should bring information about all this. He had to be present to help and direct so that the likeness could be brought out. The stupid students had gotten the crazy idea of having the portrait painted, without the professor knowing anything about it. He had sat many a time in the finely lighted studio—he remembered her best as sitting before the easel. He recollected also the air, confident of victory, with which she spoke of her contemplated journey to Paris and of her future fame—plans that left him out absolutely.

He remained standing with a book in his hand. His broad chest heaved under the silken cords—it was because she did not want to prolong his torture,

that she had acted the way she did—that evening after the party. She had answered him right. He was thankful for the light she had shed over his being. There was both light and warmth. He felt the warmth of it yet, but the light was gone:

*Where you go, on your path I will scatter
Every flower, every sweet-scented leaf,
To each bird that is heard I'll go begging
With their singing to banish your grief.*

Yes, the final upshot was the best thing that could have happened. He had written and asked for a refusal—point blank, so that he would build no castles in the air—and could take up his calling, which would occupy him entirely. He could never do that if he continued building air-castles. He has understood that she did not care so very much for him, so there was no actual need of having it in black and white. He had received an answer to that end—he still kept on building air-castles in which she dwelt. Every now and then he saw something that ought to be painted—and she should paint it. He should have pointed it out to her.

And it was to be that way, no doubt. She had her calling, and he had his. In truth, he had never tried to think of her as his wife—she—think of it—living in a small city, to be set up as a model in the ladies' aid—a target for the wit and spite of angry dames—turned upside down and inside out as a minister's wife—in a Norwegian congregation—nix! It was best as it was! Certainly—it was best—yes.

His eye wandered helplessly and with a troubled look about the large study, which all of a sudden had become bare and empty.

Yes, after all, it was best. It could not be otherwise—.

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“Jorgina!”

He sauntered into the kitchen. “Jorgina!”

“Let me have a cup of coffee, please! The Nelson coffee. Don’t forget it. Those Wangels may keep their slop. We two prefer the other kind, do we not?”

Jorgina shook her gray head. She laughed. There were two kinds of ministers. The one kind was such as Wangel of the Synod and Nelson of the United Church, and the other was such as Welde—who really were ministers only when they had the gown on. But she caught herself abruptly. There were also two ways in which to judge clergymen.

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Pastor Welde was in excellent spirits when he was comfortably seated that afternoon in the leather-upholstered corner of Brooten’s automobile. By his side sat Theodora, Brooten’s oldest daughter. Brooten himself sat in the front seat with the chauffeur, in order to learn how to drive the car. His cheerful face showed that he did not choose to remember the disagreeable scene of the previous evening. It made Welde feel good. Miss Brooten understood how to dress. She was one of the few who look well in brown. Her eyes were brown also, and she sat there so lady-like and proper, watching her father, so that he might do nothing that would betray poor manners. She had given him careful directions as to what he should do and what he should not do, and he conducted himself so well that she could give Welde a good deal of attention. She told about the people they met and about the houses they drove by. She gave him the name of the people and also knew what the houses cost. Welde listened and was interested. It was just the kind of conversation that seemed natural under the circumstances. Theodora’s friendly

and reliable eyes were so safe and motherly. They were also watchful. Now and then she would interrupt the conversation with a—"but papa," spoken to her father when he greeted someone rather boisterously. She would then in all confidence say to Welde: "I would give a great deal if I could break papa of saying 'Hello Jim!' and 'How do you do, Doc!' when we are out. But papa has worked his way up and there is so much that clings to people of that kind. It is almost impossible to break them of those habits."

Brooten was in high spirits. In common with so many strong people, he too, had his weak points. In spite of his high standing and his wealth, he had not been able to hold his own in the so-called higher circles of society in town. He had associated chiefly with his own country-men, and his English was quite broken. In vain he had sent his daughters to a dancing school and to the best institutions of learning. Theodora had often wept bitterly when they were ignored by the society set. Sometimes she thought it was their father's fault, perhaps it also was their mother's, who had been a housemaid before she married Brooten. Be that as it may, they had been humiliated time and again. Brooten himself had also been indignant at this. He considered himself as good as any of the "big-bugs." So he put himself in the harness and made a great effort in order that the Norwegians might build just as expensive a church as the Americans and Germans. Now he had also secured a swell minister. The others had none that could come up to him in high-toned appearance. He liked to show him off—yes, the automobile and his daughter, too. He knew his own short-comings, but there was a satisfaction in sitting there as owner of several things entirely up-to-date. He had the satisfaction of seeing car-

riage after carriage and car after car slacken their speed as they exchanged greetings. They met on an equal footing now, and in his business it did not hurt to blow the trumpet. It would strengthen the bank. Col. Roberts and his two daughters had to be introduced, and the colonel said something about the time when he might find Brooten in his office. Brooten rubbed his hands. It was Winnipeg real estate that the colonel wished to speak to him about. That alone would pay for the car. Ex-senator Stewart, who was taking his sick wife out for an airing, cracked a joke while passing, and Winchell Brothers wished to find out what he had paid for the car.

No wonder Brooten was in good humor. In the back seat Theodora was busy telling all about the beautiful homes and other things belonging to these fine people. The pastor enjoyed it immensely.

The weather was also fine. Some heavy showers had purified the air, and apple and plum trees were in bloom. The lilacs were pouring out their fragrance until the air seemed to be loaded with it. He inhaled it in long, deep draughts. His heart was like an empty, deserted room with broken walls. Those deep breathings helped wonderfully. And this well-bred, nice young lady at his side also helped to fill the empty space within him with her gossip about the people they passed. She became more interesting as time passed, and forgot to watch her papa. Pastor Welde also became animated and told things and made humorous remarks. They both laughed and had fun, and Brooten had to turn and shake his finger at them.

Yes, this was quite different from his father's jolting along in his old buggy, over poor roads some twenty odd years before, Welde soliloquized. It was a good thing and gave one a feeling of confidence to

have men like Brooten in the congregation—men who could be depended on. Along the sidewalks people stopped and stared at the party. Many of them greeted him with a broad smile of recognition. They were his own, he thought, and Theodora's eyes told with a satisfied gleam: they are ours.

The conversation went on, and all three of them laughed at a remark made haphazard by Brooten, when the chauffeur hastily applied the brakes. They had nearly run over someone. It was a broad, awkward figure with a coat that was greenish-yellow across the shoulders. The man had turned around in his fright and stood as if he did not quite understand what had happened. Welde saw a large, protruding mouth open behind the thin beard. It was Pastor Mosevig. The car had stopped, but not quickly enough to keep the wheels from passing over a package that he had dropped in the excitement. He went and took it carefully out of the mud and examined it. It was perhaps a piece of meat. He stood and turned the flattened and muddy package over and over, as tho he did not know whether he should save it or not. Welde did not hear what Brooten called out to him, or what answer he got. He saw only the dirty package and the mud with which the faded coat was bespattered. He remembered, however, as in a dream, that Brooten had patted the chauffeur on the shoulder and said he was a "corker" and how near they were to having one parson less in the world. Theodora had noticed that Welde suddenly turned pale and put his hand to his heart. Perhaps there was some reason for the talk that he had a weak heart.

"How fortunate that there was no accident," she said soothingly.

"But was there really no accident?" the minister

asked absent-mindedly. "Pastor Mosevig was nearly run over."

"True enough, sir, but he saved his arms and legs, and that was presumably the most important," said Theodora with a touch of gayety.

"Ah, yes—you are right, most likely. Yes, he did not get hurt, thank God; but Mosevig looked as if something was crushed inside of him—and then those mud spots on his coat."

"He'll get them rubbed off, no doubt."

"You're right, Miss Brooten, you're certainly right, but it seems to me that we are the ones that ought to rub them off."

Theodora pondered somewhat irresolutely on this, and her friendly, brown eyes passed from the minister to her father and back again. If he only had laid the blame on the chauffeur. "I think he ought to have looked out," she said at last.

"I think so, too," said Welde gayly. "I'm sitting here speculating whether one does not have a perfect right to drive over those who do not look out—put on full speed—right over them—splashing thru the mud." He laughed in a constrained manner.

Brooten turned half way about in his seat, "I have no scruples about driving over such ones as do not look out," he said.

"Not ministers, either?" joked Theodora.

"No, ministers must look out, too," laughed Brooten.

CHAPTER VII

It had been unusually quiet during study hours that afternoon. It was fortunate, as the minister felt strangely troubled after the automobile ride. Suppose he had driven right over this man as he had driven over his food. The Mosevig family will perhaps not have any meat for supper tonight. Of course he himself could not help it; it was easy to reason thus, but the worst of it was he had felt all the time as tho he were taking the bread out of the mouth of this elderly and shabby servant of the Lord. He said nothing and did nothing; but he always came in his way like someone with an unpaid bill.

Jorgina was very busy. She had made use of Welde's absence to clean and put things in order. Well and good, but she might leave his papers alone. Now she had cleared away everything—the book he had been reading, the **Herald**, the newspapers and magazines. He really ought to go and ask her what she meant by hiding things so he could not find them. She was taking unheard of liberties. Now she kept on rummaging around in the other rooms. Was she possessed?

At the supper table he would give her a piece of his mind — that is, if she seemed somewhat normal again. He would ask her if she used to put away the papers kept by Pastor Wangel or Pastor Nelson's magazines, and if they could stand this without rebelling against her and all her ways.

But it came to naught.

Jorgina was in high spirits, and the kitchen, which always was neat and tidy, was super-clean. Everything shone. So he knew that something was in the

wind. Jorgina kept her secret faithfully. She kept it so close that it fairly oozed out of both face and hands.

Had she not maneuvered surprise parties for both Pastor Wangel of the Synod and for Pastor Nelson of the United? Didn't she know how to keep her mouth shut so that the minister should not notice anything? You bet!

And she kept her mouth shut so tight that Welde understood it all. He was young enough to be glad, almost boisterously happy. He could plainly see that Jorgina was happy and nervous. They spied on each other now. He must not let on that he knew anything, nor she that she did know something. The conversation—the few words that fell, tallied with the situation.

"You have had a real house-cleaning today, Jorgina?"

"Yes, that's true."

"Do you expect company, perhaps?"

"Yes, Mrs. Berven has promised to come tonight, and she keeps all kinds of eyes about her."

"Well said, Jorgina. Don't fib." He munched his slice of bread and butter in silence and contentedly. Now he understood why Brooten had taken him out riding and why there had been so few in the study, and why she had made use of the half-hour he spent at the hospital, to put the study in order.

He wondered whether it would be best to go into the study and disarrange things a little, so that it would look more natural. If he was not thoroly surprised, the women would blame Jorgina.

She was no master in the art of simulation. Perhaps that was the reason that she had never married?

Now she was in the sitting room again—using her dust cloth and humming a tune. Likely she would

be whistling soon. Of course it was impossible to tell anything by her.

He walked carelessly thru the sitting room, stretched himself, yawned, and said he thought he would take a walk, for things were altogether too fine for him now in the parsonage.

"Will the pastor be gone long?"

"No." He figured a little. Eight o'clock was the usual time for ministers. "I'll be gone about an hour, perhaps," he said.

That would fit in perfectly. Jorgina's heart beat loudly. "The pastor will surely be home by that time?"

"Yes, yes, certainly. Yes, I'll be home by that time. The weather is so nice. It's fine to take a constitutional."

So he went, and old Jorgina was very happy, congratulating herself that he had not understood anything.

He would then also smoke his cigar outside, so there should be no ashes in the study.

To make sure, she would go thru the study once more and put away some of the knick-knacks. They might easily get lost when so many people of all kinds came. One could never be too careful. She would also bring some chairs down from the rooms upstairs.

When Welde came back the parsonage swarmed with people. He had bethought himself of making a sick call in the outskirts of the city, and it had taken more time than he had counted on.

The lawn in front of the parsonage was transformed as if by magic. On the steps stood Brooten, the banker, directing everything. His administrative ability showed itself in whatever he undertook to do.

Japanese lanterns hung on ropes stretched between the trees. An express wagon had brought tables and chairs from the basement of the church. Behind the house, the large icecream containers stood in readiness, and the dishes belonging to the ladies' aid were being carried in at that moment. In the midst of all this busy activity Brooten stood firm as a rock. The orderlies came and brought directions back.

All these things were but trifles compared with the speech he was to make. The thought of this troubled him. He knew it by heart when he left his home. He found a chance to look at the paper on which he had written his notes. To people in general it appeared as if he were looking over some of the bills for the party. He was, however, reciting his speech to himself and did not like to have anyone come near him.

If it had not been for Theodora, he would have let Berven make that speech. That idiot could be used for almost anything requiring culture. He was of little account in other ways, but he could be used for such things.

The kitchen and the adjoining dining room were regular beehives. Here Mrs. Berven was the ruling spirit. Everything had to be as the better classes in Norway used it. Bread and butter with eggs and anchovies, goat-cheese, spiced Dutch cheese, thin slices, cut so and so and put together just so. In vain did Jorgina interpose with Mrs. Wangel of the Synod and Mrs. Nelson of the United. The other busy and capable women did the work under the steadily recurring refrain: "Wonder if there'll be enough." And they worked and toiled and perspired and vied with each other in working rapidly and wondered all the time whether there would be enough.

It was Berven who had conceived the idea, and Brooten had said it was "all right." The church choir

was squeezed together on the veranda, and when the minister's tall form appeared at the garden gate it burst forth with "The Heavenly Song of Praise." It was singing that would have been a credit to anybody. The choir was the pride of the congregation. The song rose and swelled on his ear like a mighty organ. Welde felt a lump in his throat. The tears sprang to his eyes. He had to lean against the garden gate. The song rose jubilantly. They saw that he was really surprised, and sang still louder. He was quite overcome and almost staggered when he took the steps after the song was finished, and was met by the many outstretched hands and merry, smiling faces. It was the young people of the congregation that now wanted to take possession of him, and he felt in league with them.

He was ushered in. The study, sitting room, and reception room were all filled with people. They were the older members of the congregation. The wealthier ones had gathered in the study. In the sitting room were people of the middle class, and in the reception room sat a number of men who were not so well off, with a cigar box that had just been emptied among them. The conversation was carried on in subdued tones, and all moved their chairs a little when Brooten and other prominent men came in, escorting the minister.

The choir sang again out on the veranda, and Deacon Svale stepped forward to introduce Mr. Brooten, who in turn was to make the speech for the occasion.

Old Mr. Svale was very kindly and genial. The congregation consisted mostly of common, unlearned people, the same kind that Jesus largely associated with. But one found also that Jesus had powerful friends like the centurion, of whom we read in Luke, Chapter 7.

Bank President Brooten was also such a captain or leader, who has servants under him, and when he says to one: "Come," he goes—and when he says to another: "Go," he comes; but now he understood that he had put it wrong and corrected himself under loud protest from Mr. Brooten, and there was general laughter. Berven, who was known to go on a spree once in a while, looked quite embarrassed. Well,—old Mr. Svale got a going again and introduced Brooten with thanks to God for having given the congregation such a support and leader.

Brooten came forward and bowed and excused himself for his want of practice in public speaking, and also for not being prepared. He was not a man of many words, but he had had the opportunity of giving his mite to the building and establishment of Zion Congregation. It now stood like a rock, and he was glad that he could count himself among those who had built the walls. But when one had built walls one must have a watchman on the walls. By the grace of God—he might say—he had been permitted to help keep the watchman on the wall also.

After he had made a fair start, he scored one good hit after another. It was quiet in the rooms, and his daughter Theodora had every reason to be pleased with him. He was also satisfied with himself and dwelt on what the church had cost and how it was built. He told what the parsonage was worth now, with the adjoining lot—and what the congregation had contributed to the different branches of church work. He spoke of the good feeling that had always ruled, for which they all ought to thank God, who, next to the former pastor, should be praised because everything went so well. He was not a man of many words; but he wished to speak of the importance of keeping the Word of God in its truth and

purity in times like ours, when all kinds of sects, under different names, like wolves in sheep's clothing, tried to sneak into the fold. They needed a watchman on the walls of Zion who could keep the fold together and give warning, and blow the trumpet when the enemy appeared. As a business man he was not a man of many words. His speech was mostly yes, yes, and no, no,—perhaps sometimes he said yes when he ought to say no, and no when he should have said yes; but he would say that they were very glad, because they had a new minister in place of the old one who had resigned on account of old age. They had also been thinking that a new minister needed some substantial encouragement in his field of work—something that was tangible and could be touched and handled and which had real value for the new watchman of their church.

He would therefore present him with this silken purse together with its contents as an encouragement from the congregation, in the hope that his preaching would be as pure as the metal with which the purse was filled.

He presented the purse to the pastor with a pompous bow and a beaming face. He knew what the purse contained. When Zion Congregation took hold, there was no humbug about it.

During the long speech the pastor sat as if in a dream, with his eyes fastened on the picture on the wall. A couple of the oldest men in the congregation had placed themselves right across from him, and with their necks stretched forward they stared at him as if to see what effect Brooten's words produced. When he tried to evade those looks, his eyes became fixed on the picture on the wall. There the people sat also and listened as if they were astonished—. "They were astonished."—How many times this passage occurred

in the Gospels! There must have been thousands that went about and marvelled and were astonished at Jesus. They wondered at Him in the hall of judgment and at Golgotha—they kept on wondering themselves away—away into the outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. With all their astonishment, they were even worse than those that cried, Crucify Him!—He, Welde, was Pilate, and sat and pondered, and Brooten was making him a speech about,—yes, what was it about? It was to the effect that Jesus was superfluous. It was about the walls of Zion and church building and pure doctrine and real estate, or what it all might be. He sat and pondered, and the others wondered; but where was Jesus? And he sat and pondered.—Now he knew why Pilate had washed his hands. It was because of that broad, fat, straddling fellow who with long strides had come up to him after the judgment had been passed, had pressed his hand and said: “Now you are the friend of Caesar, Pilate!—I am only a business man, but I will remember you with something tangible—now that you have condemned Jesus.—Well done, Mr. Pilate! I’m not a man of many words.—Thanks, old fellow, many thanks. We need such a watchman on the walls of Zion. Thank you very much!” And so Pilate understood that he had done wrong and felt ashamed and had gone and washed the hand which had been pressed.

There was thundering applause as Mr. Brooten laid the purse in the minister’s hand. It was heavy and fell thru his fingers to the floor with a thud. This brought him to his senses. In this purse lay also some hard-earned dollars, gifts of love from the men in the reception-room, who sat there and smoked, and from the others.

He rose and thanked the people falteringly. He

was out of breath and deeply moved. Again the applause broke loose, and once more the choir sang. All were touched. Brooten himself was moved. His words had evidently made a deep impression on the minister.

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Ere long the rooms had emptied their contents of people into the garden, and the garden its contents into the rooms. Mr. Berven had made up a quartet that rendered from the veranda: "The pussycat sat on the roof." He gave the cat solo himself, and there was merriment even out in the street, where a number of outsiders had gathered. People stood in small groups and smoked and talked. Dr. Spohr went about alone. When he saw a woman with a child on her arm, he would stroke its cheeks with his knuckles and ask about its name and how old it was. The women would get advice gratis if anything was the matter with their children. Behind the woodshed there was always a small crowd with a bottle among them. Refreshments were being served to all. In the study some of the saw-mill workers had gathered and smoked their pipes and gossiped, while outside, in front of the house, the young people played "Pig in the parlor," singing merrily, while a little boy accompanied them on a mouth-organ. The sitting-room was full of children, and the wealthy men of the congregation stood in groups and discussed politics and business, while the less wealthy stood at a distance and listened to the conversation. Over in the corner of the garden a couple of girl friends had seated themselves in the grass. They sang "Juanita" as a duet with clear but not overly strong voices. The sweet harmony reached farther than they had counted on, and drew listeners. Among them was the minister.

Out thru the garden gate, every now and then some young fellow with his cap tilted on one side

and a bare-headed girl, all in white, would slip thru. They would walk around the block and would meet other young men and bare-headed girls who were out on the same errand. On the other side of the block, where no-one saw them, they would put their hands about each other's waists and take short-steps along the side-walk; for now they were far away from the eats and the parson and the "pig in the parlor" and the whole concern.

CHAPTER VIII

The big battle was fought to a finish. Mrs. Berven had visited Jorgina in the parsonage. She had a suspicion that Mrs. Thompson had been there and secured assistance.

She had proceeded in a very diplomatic manner, making a start by praising Mrs. Thompson. She had said that as far as she knew, Mrs. Thompson was the only one that understood how to soak the fish—at least that was the way she talked.

She couldn't possibly have any reason for saying such a thing, Jorgina thought, for she herself and Mrs. Thompson had talked about this, and as far as she could understand, Mrs. Thompson knew only as much about it as every house-wife ought to know. She then began to tell about the different ways in which fish was prepared at Wangel's and Nelson's.

Mrs. Berven pricked up her ears. This story Jorgina, of course, rattled off to Mrs. Thompson, so that she had information enough. But when Jorgina also told her that she had promised to soak the fish herself in the cellar of the parsonage, Mrs. Berven became uneasy. She began to explain what a fine cellar they had at Thompson's. It was so cold that they did not even need ice, so they could save that much. She really knew nothing about the cellar, but when it was said, it was said.

Jorgina supposed that she would have to do what she had promised anyway.

This brought out more praise of Mrs. Thompson's ability.

The conversation now drifted to other subjects, and the excellent new minister was spoken of. How cap-

able he was and how well he was liked—and he was so kind. Many examples were given, among others this, that he even sewed on missing buttons on his own clothes.

Who had said that?

“Well, Mrs. Thompson certainly said it. She had even said that it was queer that he had to do such things himself, when he kept a girl—and so well paid.”

“Well paid?”

“Yes,—and so old, of course. One could not expect that she could get everything done, and the minister was so kind, she supposed he felt kind of sorry for the old hired girl with her failing eye-sight.”

“The old hired girl—felt sorry for the old hired girl? Failing eye-sight?”

“Well, yes,—Mrs. Thompson meant no harm by it, I dare say; you know that people who are born in this country do not have the refinement of the better class from Norway. She is so taken up with the minister, you know.”

Jorgina had become very sober. The old, wrinkled face was set.

“But this is a lie,” she said. “I guess Mr. Welde can afford to send his clothes to the tailor—I have never heard that a maid should also be a tailor.”

Mrs. Berven thought the same. She hoped, however, that she would say nothing to Mrs. Thompson. It was very stupid of her that she should have happened to mention it. One ought to keep such things to one-self—if one heard something.

Jorgina had grown very thoughtful, and when Mrs. Berven said good-bye, she felt it in her bones that Mrs. Thompson would have to soak the fish herself.

When Mrs. Thompson some days later came to see Jorgina, she was received very coolly. Jorgina told

her she was altogether too old and she presumed it was best for her to stay at home and sew on buttons in the minister's clothes—well-paid as she was!

Mrs. Thompson would not beg for help,—that was not her way. She would not give Mrs. Berven and the other gossips that satisfaction. She therefore told Jorgina as pleasantly as she could that the ladies' aid had decided to give the supper, and that she had sold the tickets almost alone and had ordered things and asked for cakes and had done everything alone, so she thought, or had been thinking that some other women of the church at least should have helped with this, so that she would not be alone with everything; but now she had learned something—.

To this Jorgina only replied that she had also learned something—and so matters rested.

Mrs. Thompson went to Jensen, the Dane, and ordered fish and told them to send it to her home. She knew something about the fish now, and Andrew, her husband, also knew something. Jars and tubs were procured and everything looked promising.

Mrs. Berven walked as if on pins.

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These days were warm, and a little girl belonging to one of Mrs. Berven's neighbors, who had been playing with the children over at Thompson's, came and told that there was an "awful nasty smell" over at Thompson's. The news passed over the fence to Mrs. Berven, and from there on. One of the women farther down the street happened to think that she no doubt also ought to sell some tickets for the supper. She threw a shawl over her head and went over to Mrs. Thompson to get tickets. She sat and sniffed: "What a queer smell!" Mrs. Thompson became very uneasy. She had often heard about the smell from lutefisk, so when the fish had lain in water for a couple of days

and she had noticed the disagreeable odor, she had congratulated herself with the thought that everything was just right. Now she became frightened. She did not sleep that night. What should she do? The next day several women came to get tickets to sell. Never had such interest been shown, she thought with bitterness. As time passed, she became furious. She now understood very well why they came.

About the time when she usually had her afternoon coffee, her friend, Mrs. Storlie, came. She was very much agitated and sniffed like the others. "But my dear," she said, "isn't it the fish that is spoiling?" When she thus had given vent to her feelings, the tears streamed from her eyes. Here these women had been gossiping about this, and enjoying it and she had been thinking how unchristian-like and horrid it was to gloat over it. She had said to different ones, that instead of talking about it and enjoying it they should go directly to Mrs. Thompson with it—for she had been acquainted with Mrs. Thompson for several years and knew that things like this might happen to the best people—and—.

Mrs. Thompson felt the floor rocking beneath her, but it was not her nature to give up. The fight must go on to the bitter end. She really had to ask Mrs. Storlie what she meant,—if she never had put fish to soak. She must remember that the cellar was nearly full of it. That would certainly cause a smell. It was, however, both the first and the last time that she would undertake anything like this. But no one need worry about her; if she, who lived here and slept here, could stand the smell, the others would have to stand it. But when Mrs. Storlie had gone, the strong woman burst into tears, crying: "Good Lord, what shall I do?"

She braced herself, however, when Mrs. Berven

came. She had just time to get over to the sink and begin washing her face so that she could open the door to Mrs. Berven with towel in one hand and soap-suds on the other. She finished wiping her face after Mrs. Berven came in. Mrs. Berven came to see if she could be of any help at the supper. She had heard there would not be help enough; then she sniffed with a startled air and wrinkled her nose so that it crept up between her eyes: "But what in the world is it that smells so, Mrs. Thompson? How awful! It can't be dead rats or something like that—good gracious, what can it be?"

Mrs. Thompson was busily engaged in wiping her face and hands: "That smell comes perhaps from **your** house, Mrs. Berven. The wind is from that direction. Perhaps the bad smell comes from the dirty diapers that have been lying in water on your back porch since Monday morning—or from all the dirty clothes in the house—or from your bedding, that you haven't aired since you moved in, over a year ago. It may be from your children, Mrs. Berven, or from yourself, as you most likely never wash your body—."

Mrs. Berven stood as if petrified: "O, you horrid, vulgar woman," she hissed. "You'll answer for this. The living God is my witness." Her tears were let loose and so was her tongue. But Mrs. Thompson pointed to the door. "Out with you, right on the spot," she exclaimed and stamped her foot—"and the smell will disappear too!" But when the door was between her and Mrs. Berven, she again burst out crying.

When Mrs. Berven came home, she had to run in to her neighbor, where she could weep her fill, and she soon felt better. Mrs. Thompson had certainly gotten herself into a scrape.

When Andrew came home in the evening, Mrs. Thompson consulted him. She had often found him

quite sensible when she once in a while had asked for his advice. "It must have been too warm for the fish," he said. Mrs. Thompson was in despair—she could only sob when she tried to say something.

"We must get some more fish," he said, "and try again. We'll get a little ice and change the water oftener."

"Yes, perhaps I did not change it often enough," she sobbed. She knew she had not changed the water at all. Jorgina had said nothing about that. Too bad that she had not consulted Andrew before. But how could she be aware that he knew more than she did?

"And then perhaps the fish was not the way it should be either," her husband consoled her.

Mrs. Thompson became more calm. That was not unlikely—now that she knew what was the matter. She had in fact thought that the fish did not seem to be as it ought to be when it was cut up into pieces, but she presumed they'd have to pay for it now anyway—after all the work she had had.

"I guess we can manage that," said her husband.

In the evening—or perhaps it was in the night—Andrew got rid of the fish. No one knew how he disposed of it. It was thought that he dug a hole in the ground and dumped the mess into it. Neither did anyone find out how they got the new fish soaked. Tho the time was hort, the big supper came off as advertised. The hall was filled, and all praised the fish. A large number of tickets were sold. The best society in town was there, and there was a tremendous rush and a bustle without end. No one could remember anything like it. Thorvald Larson, who sold tickets at the door and put the money into an empty cigar box, scarcely knew how to take care of it all. There came silver and gold and bills. The

young girls, dressed in Norwegian national costumes, ran about among the tables, flushed and feverish. In the kitchen, three of the most capable women, veterans from a hundred church affairs, stood washing dishes with all their might and still fell short. The supper was served at long tables. Capable hands arranged the food on dishes and trays, and even Mrs. Brooten and the doctor's wife worked as if possessed. Mrs. Berven, whose sister had not arrived from Chicago, helped wipe dishes.

Mrs. Thompson outshone them all, however. She was here and there and everywhere. Her keen eye went from table to table. Here sugar was lacking, there bread. At one place a man sat looking around for a spoon; at another place the melted butter for the fish was cold. She saw those who had not been served, and saw still better those who never seemed to get enough.

But there was no smile on Mrs. Thompson's face. She was as busy as ever; but a distinct "shut-up-and-leave-me-alone" was written plainly, both crosswise and lengthwise on her expressive countenance. The small nose was red—an unmistakable sign that she had shed many tears; but she nevertheless carried it high that evening.

And the others stepped aside for her with great consideration and were afraid to speak to her, for they knew that this time Mrs. Thompson had done all the work alone. She had arranged everything and everything had been done with dispatch, as it usually was when she was at the head. Besides, she had sold over one hundred tickets of her own accord. Such a crowd of people had never been seen. When the rush was at its height, Larson reported that he had already received over fifty dollars for admissions, besides the tickets. It looked as if they might take in over two hundred dollars.

Well might they step aside for Mrs. Thompson to-night, for the fish was excellent—even Jorgina had to confess that it could not have been better.

Why was Mrs. Thompson offended? Well, it was rumored that she had spoiled over fifty pounds of fish by neglecting to change the water which it was soaked in, and that the people in the house had nearly died from the stench.

As if **she** did not know how to soak lutefisk! It was true that in one of the jars the fish was spoiled, and she was sure that the fish was rotten when she bought it. Jensen, the Dane, had been obliged to confess that some of the fish had not been like the rest. All the women listened and said, "Yes, yes," and "of course" in a way that could not be misinterpreted. Mrs. Thompson did not even get a chance to exonerate herself.

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When the entertainment was over and the proceeds from the sale of tickets had been figured out, she went over to Pastor Welde and laid two hundred and forty dollars and eight cents on the table, together with an account in full and all the receipted bills.

And now she would say good-bye, she was going to leave. Not even from the minister's own house had she received a helping hand, so now she'd call it quits. There were other churches where they did not put the whole burden on one alone—and slander the victim besides.

The minister sat dumbfounded. When he began to reason with her, she courtesied herself backwards toward the door. She had had enough, thanks. She was thru now, many thanks!

About a week later one might have read in the local papers that the ladies' aid in Pastor Mosevig's congregation would, God willing, meet next Thursday at Mrs. Andrew Thompson's on Garfield Avenue.

CHAPTER IX

The days passed by. The minister's forenoons were usually devoted to calling on the sick. Never had they seen such a minister at the sick bed. He knew how to comfort and encourage, and if the doctor came directly after the minister, he found his patient more hopeful and with a desire to live, which doctors count of more value to the patient than medicine. People sometimes told how he came into the sickroom with a flower or a branch of lilac in his hand, and he frequently would begin to talk about it and explain, just like a scientist, what wonders had taken place in that flower, how it had developed from the beginning, how it received its color from the sunlight, and that the fragrance was our Lord's own secret. How, after having been a joy to the eyes and other senses of man, it faded and produced seeds that might bring forth still more beautiful flowers of the same kind. This seed and the germ of life in it were also God's own secret. When the flower appeared the homeliest, then it was nearest to God's greatest mystery. The flower became sick and faded just in order that the glory of God might appear in an everlasting youth. He did not seem to preach at all. It was only as if the conversation accidentally drifted into the field of religion after a while. When he left, the flower, the little branch, or whatever it might be, remained on the sick person's table. It gave a feeling of confidence to have such a big and learned man seated at one's bedside. So they said: "Please, come again soon if you can." He became interested in these sick people and in the development of the disease. He was able to see at a glance whether they were better

or worse. There was even a case where the doctor jokingly offered to divide his fees with the pastor.

The case was that of Jim Brekke, who was sick at the hospital. He belonged to the "awakened," and lay with shining eyes only awaiting the summons to depart from this life. Many of the "friends" met at his sickbed and heard glorious testimonies about how great it was to be prepared to die. He testified the same before the minister and lifted his emaciated hands from the quilt and praised God because he was soon to depart from this vale of sorrows.

The minister did not seem to be properly touched by this. "How long have you been lying this way, Mr. Brekke?"

"This is the ninth week."

"And you feel about the same?"

"Well, yes, but I get weaker little by little, and the cough eats itself deeper and deeper down day by day." He fumbled with his hands along the spread to show how far down the cough had already gone.

The pastor sat and studied. "You've given up everything, have you?" he said at last.

"Yes, I am completely cut loose from everything, now. When death comes, I am ready."

"That's good—that's very good, Brekke," said the minister, "but suppose you should get well again, would you be prepared for that?"

"No, such thoughts I have put out of mind entirely."

"That's too bad, that's very wrong. When you really are dead, you must remain dead—and at home with God; but as long as you are alive, the Lord surely expects you to be ready to live. It is no trick to prepare yourself for something that you can not escape. You are living yet, and I presume the Lord

means you should live—as long as you are living anyway.”

The sick man folded his hands and said as if in defiance: “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that is enough for me!”

The minister did not give up, however. “How is it with your wife and children?” he asked. “I always see them in church,” he continued. “Your little girl—now, what is her name?”

“Mabel.”

“Oh, yes, Mabel, I have such a poor memory for names—she usually has a red checked apron on—and Annie, she is in the confirmation class. The little boys—both of them—well, yes—it shows on their trousers that they are boys all right. And your wife—how do you think it will be with them when you are gone?”

“I have left them in the hands of God,” he whimpered.

“That’s very well, but we can’t be sure that God wants you to die just now. The doctor says that there are indications that you may be lying this way for a long time. You have a lot to do and a lot to take care of. Your neighbors’ youngsters are tearing down the fence and the gate was hanging on one hinge when I passed your home lately.”

“So they’re tearing down the fence, are they?” he asked in an ominous tone.

“It looks that way,” said the minister.

The sick man lay silent for a while, and a look of distress passed over his face.

“Does the pastor really think I can get well again?” he said.

“I don’t know,” said Pastor Welde, “I’m not a doctor, but I do know that if the Lord sees you are determined to die and the doctor sees that you do not

care to live—well, then there is no hope, I suppose.”

“But what shall I, poor, sick man, do?”

“You must pray to God to let you remain with your family a while longer. Just think about it, wouldn’t you like to live? Your wife and children would miss you very much if you should die. You might ask the doctor whether you may sit up a little and get more to eat. Yes, you’d better talk to him about it, for you’ll never get well if you do not want to get well.”

Two weeks later Jim Brekke had improved sufficiently to be taken home from the hospital, and in a few days he was busy repairing his fence.

One branch of the pastor’s work that brought him great pleasure was the young people’s society. In a way it was his child of sorrows. He had a strong feeling that something ought to be done for all the young people that had lately come from Norway. The girls usually worked as servant girls, and the boys worked in the factories and saw-mills. They were far away from friends and kindred, and no one looked up the servant girls to get them to go to church, nor the boys who lived in the boarding houses and whose only entertainment seemed to be found in card playing and in the saloons.

The leading men of the congregation were anxious to have a young people’s society, but it would have to be planned for their own young people, and, if possible, be conducted in the English language. The pastor spoke of the young immigrants that one must try to reach in this manner. He also believed that the young people of the congregation ought to learn Norwegian and be trained in using this language. At last it was decided that the meetings should be conducted in the Norwegian language. But now they

were attacked along another line. All must become members of the congregation. The older members said it would not do to have their young people come in contact with other societies and sects and have devotional exercises with them. Finally it was decided that the society should not be considered as belonging to the congregation, but should be independent. Thus the minister was in a way cut off from it. The society was, however, allowed to use the basement of the church.

The young people of the church joined with great enthusiasm. The pastor gave some popular lectures and racked his brains to find something that would interest the young people. It was very difficult. He soon found that the young Norwegian-Americans living in town had been sadly neglected. There were well-dressed young boys and girls out of their teens who had never read a book outside their school books. Many had talent for music, however, and declamations were in vogue. He began to practice dialogs with them, and pieces in which several could take part. The attendance was very good, and all wanted to attend the meetings. One thing led to another and the dialogs were later 'given with mimicry, and false beards were used when one of the boys was to impersonate an old man.

Instantly the whole congregation was up in arms. The church had become a theater!

The pastor, who had himself feared that things might be carried too far in this direction, apologized, and the dialogs were stopped. Then they tried debates, but the Norwegian-American young people had nothing to disagree about. It was utterly impossible to get them to take part. But the older ones came and took part, "expressing" themselves so freely as to arouse ill feeling, and the young people stayed

away. When the minister, as the president of the society, put a stop to this, he found that this also was wrong, of course.

In the meantime, the young people that he was most anxious to reach, had begun to come. After a good start had been made there was a constant stream from that source. They were intelligent enough. Some of them proved to be better versed in Norwegian literature than the minister himself. To keep up with them he had to read a good deal. A written paper was started and read at their meetings. The church choir was, however, the **corps elite** of the society, and musical entertainment was never wanting. The church basement could scarcely room all that came. So encouraging was this work, that the minister was fairly shocked at finding himself thinking just as much about the young people's society as about the congregation.

It was rather difficult to keep all these young people together. The "newcomer" boys made money and were quite flush with it. The boys of the congregation went to school mostly and were fitting themselves for this and that, or they loafed at home and were often too fine to do hard manual labor but not capable enough to fill good positions in stores and offices. They looked with envy upon the hard-fisted "newcomers," who often outbid even Mr. Brooten himself when the auctioneering took place at the basket socials. The Norwegian hired girls dressed fully as well as the wealthiest young ladies in the church, and that would, of course, also give offence.

Pastor Welde had to try to keep it all well balanced. With the utmost consideration towards the strangers, he took care that the young people of the church were not put in the background. All went very well. Then he began a night school. One eve-

ning he instructed the native-born boys and girls in Norwegian, another evening he taught the “new-comer” young folks English. In this manner he tried to smooth out the differences. All this took time, but he knew he did not neglect his duties to the congregation. The older people saw how the young rallied both to their society and to church, and congratulated themselves that they had gotten the minister on the right track. Things would not have run so smoothly if he had had his own way.

Pastor Welde was happy. No branch of his work gave better promise. A spark of pride also lay there smouldering. The question as to the young people was the weak point in nearly all city churches.

His parishioners began to admire him. He gained a reputation for his work in the hospital and by the sick-bed, and he did not have his equal in getting the young people together. Even if he had to take the back seat as compared with the old minister in preaching, in a private conversation his talk was so pleasant and full of sweet consolation. As to the altar service—no one could perform it better than he. They agreed fairly well on that.

He was no longer considered quite superfluous.

CHAPTER X

It was late in the afternoon and the minister sat in his study.

The doorbell rang. Thorvald Larson came to see the minister. He looked very grave and would not sit down. He came to tell the minister that God had been good to him and had helped him get that job as janitor anyway. He had not had much hope when he was in the study the last time. He had begged the minister to write an application for him, and the minister had not done it. The minister had signed one for a drunkard, who had the advantage of standing in with the politicians, because he patronized the saloons. This man got the support of the church, yet now he had gotten the place without petition or signatures. It was God who had helped by moving the hearts. And now he wanted his own name and those of his family taken off the minister's books. He neither could nor would belong to such a congregation.

Pastor Welde sat there quite bewildered. He remembered distinctly the man's visit as well as the encounter with Brooten and his visit to the school commissioner, but most clearly he remembered the man's request which he had not granted. Here the poor fellow had tormented himself with the thought that no one would do anything for him.

"It was very fortunate that you got the place after all. Let me congratulate you, Mr. Larson," said the minister and went over to the man, who took his outstretched hand in a hesitating manner. "I'm very glad—and surprised too, for it did not look very promising for you," continued the minister.

"No—if the pastor and Brooten had had it their

way—but there is One who is stronger than both the church and the bank, and He directs the hearts of men like rivulets of water.”

“Yes, that is true, Mr. Larson,” interposed the minister with warmth. “I am glad that your prayer was heard.” He recollected now how he had been driven to go out that evening. God had used him as His instrument in this instance. That was certain.

“But why do you want to leave the congregation, Mr. Larson? You are one of the best members we have. Your children are so smart and that girl of yours who sings in the choir—no, you must think this over first. What reason do you have to take this step?”

A bitter smile gathered on the man’s sober face. “I think the pastor can guess the reason. When I am slighted and cast aside for one of the worst drunkards in town, and by our own minister at that, then I am not worthy to remain in the congregation, either.”

He went slowly towards the door. “Well, good-bye, then,” he said and passed the palm of his hand over his eyes, as he walked down the stairs. He was only a plain and poor man, but he had loved his church, both the old one and the new. It was hard to leave it.

It took a couple of minutes before Welde gathered his thoughts: Why, the man did not know that it was **he**, Welde, who really had gotten him the place. His first impulse was to run after him—yes, actually run after him. He stopped in the half-open door, however. He could perceive himself running out of breath and calling after him: “Larson—hey, Larson! It was not God, it was I who got you the job!”

So he closed the door and returned into the office. He hunted up a cigar and lit it, but forgot to smoke.

Then he lit it once more and puffed away, quite in despair, until the door-bell rang again.

It was one of the deacons, Mr. Bundegaard, who came—a serious-minded man who attended strictly to his duties and who had a very responsible position as foreman at one of the saw-mills.

He came to talk to the minister about Ole Narvesen on Garfield Avenue—he lived next door to Mr. Berven and across the street from Mrs. Thompson.

“Mr. Thompson — Adrew Thompson,” the pastor corrected him with a laugh. The deacon had to smile, too.

It was about Ole, yes. He had become such a hard drinker now that something had to be done, presumably. It would not do to have such a man in the congregation. Everybody talked about it. Here he went to church Sunday mornings, and in the evening he would, presumably, stand by the gate and swear something awful because he could not get the latch opened, presumably. And his wife—poor thing—he had such a nice wife—she was actually abused. He would not even mention the children. They came to Sunday School with big patches here and there.

They ought to be welcome just the same, the minister thought.

Yes, of course—presumably, they ought to be, but it was this way anyhow, that Ole was making himself impossible and grew worse and worse for every day that passed, presumably. The children ran with the beer pail—they were so small that the pail barely went clear of the sidewalk, and he himself stayed around the Huseby saloon both early and late, and used the foulest mouth when he was drunk. People would, presumably, notice such a man and think: When he can stay in the church, then all can stay there—presumably—whether they live like wild heathens or not.

"No, that will never do," said the minister. "We must use the church discipline in such cases. A severe judgment is passed on such, in the Word of God, and we must observe that."

"Yes, I know that, too," said the deacon eagerly, "but I wanted to let you know about it. There is so much talk—well, you'll not get offended with me, presumably, if I say it, but there are some who think the minister is altogether too kind, so that he will do nothing to such persons."

"Well, that's what you believe," said the minister sharply and tried to look very stern. "It's not easy for a new pastor, as I am at this place, to begin with church discipline; but at the same time I know what the Word of God demands and what the church demands of me in such a case."

After they had conversed a while longer about this, the deacon took his leave. "Well, you'll presumably tend to this, then," he said, "but the wife and children we must try to keep in the church."

"Certainly," said the pastor. "They have not sinned against the rules of the church."

"No, presumably not," answered the deacon—by this time he had one foot outside the door.

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So they thought he was too kind-hearted to uphold the discipline of the church—they thought they could carry on as they pleased!

He would begin to clean this up at once. There were altogether too many inside the church who drank, and who lived a life in open sin.

Too kind? Did he coddle his own flesh and take his ease? Was he busying himself with his own affairs and official business and neglecting his most important duties?

He would go this very evening and speak to Narve-

sen and also to Thorvald Larson and Mrs. Thompson. He supposed that they would be at home after supper. Mrs. Thompson was on the point of leaving the congregation. She was welcome to leave, but he would let her know what it meant to forsake one's own assembly. With Thorvald it was only a misunderstanding; still it was not right for him to give way to his anger. It was not a good spirit that had moved him to come to the study this afternoon.

The congregation was not what it ought to be. They were trained—trained Lutherans, but how deep their Lutheranism went—not to speak of Christianity—that was an open question. No matter what the guilt might be, it would be better, however, to have a smaller congregation permeated by the Spirit of God than a large one saturated with selfishness, drunkenness, and other vices.

He looked at his watch. The sitting room door was open, and a noise was heard from the kitchen, where Jorgina was busying herself with something.

He went to the door that led out on the veranda. The town lay spread out before him. In many of the houses his parishioners were living. There were many good, kind people among them—very kind indeed. They attended the church faithfully, and out of their meager earnings they gave more to the cause of God than the rich farmers on Willow Prairie. When contributions to the church treasury were placed on the altar he had seen many a man in a worn and shabby coat put a five dollar bill there more readily than did the rich men in his father's congregation. It made him happy. They were good people—very good people, and they were so anxious about their church—were afraid the shepherd they now had was too good-natured to keep the wolves away.

Jorgina announced that supper was ready.

It was not long before the pastor was on his way toward Garfield Avenue. He walked rapidly and tried to harden himself preparatory to the necessary clash between himself and these wayward members of his congregation. In the case of the drunkard he would show him what the discipline of the church demanded. He could show no leniency any more. In Larson's case he would show forbearance. Poor fellow, he had reason for feeling injured. He would apologize in regard to signing that other man's petition. He would make them see that he was not any more afraid of humbling himself in the face of an insignificant member than he had been to call on the school director in order to redress a wrong. As to Mrs. Thompson, he had to pick a crow of a different kind. He had heard that she was a great gossip and had a domineering spirit. Instead of being anxious to keep her as a member, he would tell her the exact truth right out—that they were glad to get rid of her—or if not exactly glad, that the congregation had so strong a sense of decency that she would not feel at home there.

The pastor hurried on. As he drew nearer and nearer to Garfield Avenue, he made up his mind that he must visit Mrs. Thompson first, while he was in the right mood for giving her a sound talk.

He met Mrs. Thompson outside the door, and she waited a while, talking about this and that before she began to beg and urge him to come in. There were many eyes in that street. When they had entered the house, she was amiability itself, and talked fairly and sensibly about everything. No sooner had she learned that the minister was also going to call at Narvesen's and Thorvald Larson's than she surmised that he was on the warpath. She accordingly changed her tactics and began to praise Mrs. Narve-

sen, telling how capable and upright she was. To be sure, Ole drank a good deal, that could not be denied; but it seemed as if there were other wives that **suffered** more from his drinking than she did—just the same.

For some unaccountable reason, the pastor happened to think of Mrs. Berven—perhaps it was the faulty pronunciation of the word **suffered** that caused it—and as a means to stop her flow of language, he asked her if the Bervens did not live beside the Narvenses.

To be sure they did. And the Bervens were so careful. The beer wagon stopped outside, and they got the beer in cases. They did not run with the beer pail. And then Mrs. Berven saved herself the trouble of cooking for supper. When Berven had a bottle of beer and a little bread and butter, he was satisfied, and it was so handy to feed the children the same way. That was the way **swell** people in Christiania used to live, she supposed, but as to herself—

The pastor did not let her finish. This talk was all about neighbors. He said something to the effect that he would know himself how to deal with this case. It was his duty to do so.

Again Mrs. Thompson turned the conversation. She knew very well now that the visit to the Narvenses was on account of Ole's drinking—but what had occasioned this?

She sighed a little and said: "Oh, yes, a pastor has so many different duties to perform, and when such things are reported to him he has to take it in hand."

The minister nodded in approval.

She supposed it was mainly thru the deacons such reports came—the minister couldn't know—.

The minister drummed impatiently on the arm of the easy chair. It was the duty of the deacons, especially, to look after such matters.

Mrs. Thompson did not give up. Andrew was also a deacon, but she had often told him that Ole's drinking was not a bit worse than that of the others. Even if Ole was drunk once in a while, it was still not so bad as having the beer wagon standing outside. This genteel drinking was worse. Ole's drunkenness frightened people, but this tippling of the Bervens and of many others was much more dangerous.

The minister agreed with her in this.

She continued by telling that Mrs. Berven no doubt had "suffered" most and had a grudge, because Mrs. Narvesen, who was very poor, kept her children neater and cleaner than Mrs. Berven kept hers, tho her husband had a good salary — one hundred dollars a month. But she was a good friend of Mrs. Bundegaard, so it was "presumably" she who felt so bad over Narvesen's drinking.

Her drawling pronunciation of the word "presumably" was too much for the minister. He burst out laughing in spite of his serious errand.

"Yes, you are 'presumably' right." It was "presumably" he, he acquieced. Then they both laughed. The laughter was almost hysterical after the strained suspense.

When they at last were thru laughing, Mrs. Thompson stopped short saying: "Now you must really stay and have a cup of coffee with us. Andrew is doing some carpenter work out in the wood shed, and I'll send Clarence over to Mr. and Mrs. Narvesen, and we'll have a cup of coffee. It really was about time you paid us a visit." He could not resist her energy. Quite passively he leaned back in his chair. He still had to laugh at this "presumably," and as an echo he heard Mrs. Thompson's suppressed but still merry laughter. Before he had collected his senses, the preparations were going on. He heard Andrew ask for a

clean towel out in the kitchen, and there was noise around the stove. Next he heard a door slammed by one child, who ran off on an errand, and a while afterward another youngster started noisily off for the bakery. He understood all this—it would not do to leave now. The evening paper had come and had alighted right by his side. He took it and began to read as if this were really what he had come for. He had come into an atmosphere of energy, where a man's will seemed to be entirely blown away. Resignedly he read the first column of the first page, then Andrew came in much embarrassed, but very friendly. He seated himself, but in spite of mutual respect and attempts to meet halfway there was no life in the conversation before Mrs. Thompson came in with Mr. and Mrs. Ole Narvesen.

Mrs. Narvesen was a reserved woman with sharp features, and Ole was a middle-aged man with a lopsided mustache and a face that looked as if it were always laughing. Small wrinkles had settled around the eyes so they barely peeped out; but what little could be seen of them shone with kindness and good humor.

It was not long before the large table was set with a white cloth and shining dishes. So quickly were the things wafted forth, amidst talk and laughter, that the table seemed set as if by magic. The minister was now in excellent spirits. Again and again he repeated how fine everything tasted when one did not have to sit and eat alone. Ole had a peculiar way of being witty. He showed it mainly by mildly teasing his serious wife and Mrs. Thompson, who took her part. Andrew and the minister were kept laughing. When they were thru with the coffee and the room as quickly had been transformed from dining room to sitting room, Mrs. Thompson reminded her husband

of a cigar that he had lying somewhere. He found it and offered it to the minister. Ole fished out a somewhat ragged cigar from his vest pocket. It evidently hailed from some saloon. Andrew lit his pipe. The two women disappeared in the kitchen, where they washed the dishes, while the men smoked.

This was very cozy. Andrew was a sensible man, and when he once got started he could talk about all sorts of things. Ole's face fairly beamed with good humor. They talked about the congregation, the young people's society, and the affairs of the town. When the women came back the conversation took another turn. They talked about this and that, and among other things about Larson and his new position. They were very glad that he had gotten the job, but did not know if he could manage it. He was a very kind and good man, but both he and his wife were altogether too easy going, so they never got anywhere. Others bought green wood in the summer time and got large loads cheap and let it dry, but Larson bought dry wood in the fall and got small loads at a stiff price and let it lie outside and get wet till winter came. When he came home with his pay, they lived high and the children stuffed themselves with fruit and all kinds of things so that they got sick. Then they had to skimp till next pay-day, when they again, like starved animals, would grab the money he brought home. That was the way it went, and dire poverty and sickness came. Nothing was taken care of, not even their health, and that was most important of all. They had had so much sickness. To be sure, it would not have come if God had not permitted it; but really, people often had themselves to thank for their troubles.

Pastor Welde listened with interest. It seemed that all they said was right. Then the talk fell on the

drink habit. Ole now sat silent and depressed, and it was his wife, mainly, who led the conversation. The minister felt sorry for him. He saw how his fingers shook and trembled. He thought he had to say something, and that happened to be to the effect that it was the kindest and most capable men who most easily became the victims of the drink habit, those who otherwise were intended to become lights in the world. The best people could do was to vote the saloons out. All gave this their approval. Now it became known that Ole had been a good templar in Norway, and had also been a member of a temperance society where he was living now, but the old minister had killed it by warning against it from the pulpit. Since that time Ole had been going from bad to worse.

It was nearly nine o'clock before the pastor realized what time it was. He had spent such a pleasant evening that he proposed that they should come and have coffee at his home some evening the following week.

Then he said good-bye, and they went out with him and accompanied him to the sidewalk. There he again bid them farewell and lifted his hat, and Mrs. Thompson thanked him in a loud voice for the invitation. There were ears in that street also.

The pastor came home in high spirits. Not until some time had passed did he realize that he had not performed his errand. He had honored those he had intended to reprove. He had done just the opposite of what he had set out to do. That was the way it always went.

He grieved over this. The next day he went about in a sad mood, like one who has done something wrong.

CHAPTER XI

It was at this time that he began to associate more with Dr. Spohr. Mr. Welde felt sorry for him. Spohr was a good doctor but did not know how to assert himself. People lost faith in him. A rather young doctor had arrived from Norway, a very important personage, who swore in every other sentence and was said to be somewhat addicted to drink. His name was Ebbesen. His Godless mouth seemed to attract people. The more pious they were, the quicker they ran to Ebbesen when anything ailed them. When he told them to open their mugs so he could look into their throats, and said something about its "being as red as hell" and prescribed some infernal stuff for gargling, then they knew he was a man who understood his business. Spohr, on the contrary, was a very quiet and polite man, who would keep on for an hour examining a patient, only to tell him that he really did not understand what was the matter with him, or that he, in fact, did not need either doctor or medicine, only dieting, fresh air, etc. Even if the patient did not follow these directions, he sometimes happened to get well, which showed that the doctor did not amount to much. If they followed the directions, they gave themselves the credit, or gave it to "nature" or the Lord, as might happen, and did not like to pay their bills. Ebbesen, on the other hand, only needed to look at people to see what ailed them, and, like the doctors in the old country, he prescribed two kinds of medicine, one in liquid and one in powder form. Dr. Spohr lost nearly all his practice. He retained, however, a great reputation as a doctor for children. The poor also came to him, as he did not send them

any bills. He had another fault, which he did not like to acknowledge, namely, that he found it so difficult to tell people the truth. To the very last, he would say that consumption was a cold but had to be treated as if it were consumption, so as to be on the safe side. Cancer remained stomach trouble that might become serious. He could not bear to see the questioning eyes of his patients and would rather say that he knew nothing definite rather than to blight their hopes. This did not tend to strengthen his reputation. With parents he was frank, however, and did not hesitate about telling how it was with their children, and here his predictions, as a rule, came true. When he found that the new doctor was a more skillful surgeon than himself, he sent his surgical patients to him. While he thus let his most profitable practice pass to another, who, he had reason to believe, was his inferior in many fields of knowledge, he became bitter both toward himself and others. With the sick, however, he was always kind and considerate.

Welde was intelligent enough to understand this, and he often deplored the doctor's lack of knowledge of human nature. It was like watching a suicide to see how Spohr played his practice into the hands of the other, without getting anything but sneers in return.

This was one of the most important reasons why he attached himself to Spohr.

The doctor had entirely different reasons for seeking the company of Pastor Welde. In his opinion, Welde was decidedly unfit to be a minister. Welde had the temperament of an artist or poet. He was a creature of impulse and was put into a theological straight-jacket. A minister must be of different material, a prophet who could shake and rouse the people and sway their consciences by painting the devil

on the wall. What use do we have in our times for ministers with emotions? We need butchers—now the doctor looked quite fierce. A minister in our days has to be a butcher in a way. Dr. Spohr felt sorry for Welde. Such a man should not have become a minister. He was too kind-hearted.

They always went along bullying each other, each one using strong words to fit the other for his work. Each one saw how necessary it was for the other to assert himself and put his foot down with determination. They felt so sorry for each other that they could not become enemies either, but they always found something to quarrel about, as the one would always watch for some sign of weakness in the other. From their conversations one might think that of religions the doctor preferred the Salvation Army, John Alexander Dowie, or the Fire Worshippers, while the minister centered all his respect for the medical science in the scalpel as the only thing of value.

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They were standing in the minister's study looking at the picture, "Christ Before Pilate." Welde stood as he usually did with his hands behind his back. The doctor pulled at his pointed beard and looked very critical.

"That is a real work of art," said Welde. "It is a queer fact about a genuine work of art that you will never get done with it. I have been looking at this picture, day in and day out, until I seem to know all these fellows; still there is always something new. Real art is inspiration and this is inspiration."

"Inspiration," repeated the doctor sneeringly. "Is it inspiration to daub a canvas with some figures in Jewish costumes? This Muncaczy, by the way, is said to be an almost perfect idiot. I can't for my life

find any inspiration either in the faces or the colors—and have indeed very little faith in inspirations of any kind.”

“That is because you are an incorrigible materialist—as all you doctors are, more or less—.”

“—Judged by you ministers, who are all inveterate dreamers—.”

“No, no, just listen, now! Here, for instance, is that patch of blue sky in the background; a bit of blue sky and the gates of the city in the distance. When one looks beyond these angry, furious people, the eye is caught by this peaceful view of the blue heavens and the entrance to the city in the distance. Do you believe—can you believe that an artist would purposely reason out such a background, that contains so much—a whole sermon for the Christian?”

The doctor burst out laughing. “That was a good one, Welde! The artist sat and daubed with a lot of brown and red and then got the notion to make a blue spot to brighten it—and that you call a ‘sermon.’ This is rich!”

“Call it what you please. To us Christians, to whom the passion and death of Christ are the greatest thing that has taken place—to us this blue bit of heaven and that gate have a deep meaning—without it the execution on Calvary would have been only a judicial murder, a commonplace occurrence. It is the blue spot that gives it a meaning.”

The doctor tugged still more energetically at the point of his beard and twirled it ominously about his fingers.

“If I were to deduce any moral lesson from this canvas, it would be that it is a very useless work to preach to people—a warning to all who take their preaching seriously—you, for example.”

“Me? I have no patent on being more serious than

others, have I? Why, you have found fault with me for not being serious enough."

"Have I found fault with you? I have had nothing against you, man, except from a purely professional standpoint. I don't like that strong body of yours. That means starvation for a doctor."

"And I don't like your materialism—you're getting quite cynical, too. Following your suggestion, I would say that it means starvation for ministers to meet such obstinacy as yours."

"If I were a minister, I'd get a drum and go out on the street corners and drum the people together, and then I'd preach doomsday sermons to them. If you believe what you preach, the subject is serious enough to warrant it."

"So you think I ought to do that? But why don't you take a drum and tell the people that the air is full of tuberculosis bacilli and the water of typhoid germs and all sorts of things? That's serious enough too."

"I'm no charlatan."

"Neither am I, but when you are ready to stand on one street corner with yours, I'll stand on the other with mine. Then you can peddle your cure-all medicine and I my universal religion—then we'll see what'll come of it."

The pastor was on the point of getting angry, and the doctor understood it; but it was so tempting to tease him a little.

"What I really meant," and he assumed a very pleasant tone of voice, "is that He—and he pointed to the figure of Christ—He went up and down and preached in the streets and lanes without a fixed salary; a complete failure seen from that side. His whole congregation left Him. Why, John Alexander

Dowie did better than that. He made some money and left both a curtain factory and a candy shop!"

The pastor was about to give a sharp answer when the door bell rang. He went out and stayed for some time, talking with someone who did not want to come in.

The doctor remained inside. He was in very good humor over his last sally. Welde no doubt firmly believed in the crucifixion, the resurrection, and the divinity of Christ. It was remarkable that educated people could believe everything so literally. Still he was good. His heart was as good as gold. He was in reality a grown child, this Welde. He had the disposition of a child and consequently the faith of a child and such one must respect.

The faith of a child—the nature of a child—a disposition like a child's—.

"Unless ye become as little children—." It struck him as he stood there. There was nothing strange in Welde's being child-like in this respect. "Unless ye become as children—" yes, children. That was said by Him, who Himself had given the greatest proof of manhood—that of keeping oneself upright when one is alone among enemies—who will praise a little, bargain a little, and who want to be counted as friends.

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus"—where was it? Yes, that was also from the Bible.

He almost regretted that he had said that Christ preached without a salary. That was a shabby way of treating Mr. Welde—a spiteful way of speaking. Christ had also healed people without any salary, and they had also disappeared—they were gone when it came to a pinch.

And yet He stood there before —Pilate and would not say the word that could save Him.

Mr. Welde came back, and the doctor burst out again: "I'm glad you're back, for I'm getting over my fit of anger. I herewith solemnly retract what I said about a salary." He bent his small, stout body, clicked his heels together and spread his hands out. "I retract on account of and for the reason and because He in the picture did not demand any salary either, tho He had a large, a very large and extensive medical practice. In so far we both differ from Him and have no reason to rebuke each other, like two horse traders at a fair. We've got to live. Now, when I humbly make this retraction, what will the pastor give me in return? Will he take back this libelous accusation that I am a—what was that dreadful word—materialist—an incorrigible materialist?" The doctor bowed again, and Welde involuntarily stepped back so as to bow in return. He entered at once into the doctor's mood, saying: "I can assure Mr. Spohr that all is pardoned, I regret hereby—."

"Now, stop," the doctor interrupted, "one does not say 'hereby'—that would have been correct if I had demanded it in writing. Your language, Mr. Pastor, is beneath all criticism. Now repeat after me—." He made a sweeping gesture and struck up an attitude: "I declare upon my honor—"

"I declare upon my honor—"

"That my accusation against Dr. Johan Olavson Spohr—"

"That my accusation against Dr. Johan Olavson Spohr—"

"regarding incorrigible materialism—"

"regarding incorrigible materialism—"

"was one of the inexcusable tricks,"

"was one of the inexcusable tricks,"

"that ministers, unfortunately, often use"

"that ministers, unfortunately, often use"

"both in and out of season"

"both in and out of season"

"is to all intents and purposes formally and forever revoked, recalled, rescinded, reversed, repealed, and retracted—"

"But too cumbersome to be repeated," interrupted the minister laughingly. "That was a dreadful harangue."

"Yes, but it really was a dreadful accusation," said the doctor, dropping into a chair and wiping the sweat from his brow. They both laughed.

After a little while Welde suddenly became serious. "Now I am going to tell you, doctor, that I really owed you an apology for the expression I used."

"Are you at it again?"

"I should have said that you were a hypocrite instead."

"I'm a hypocrite—is that meant as a joke?"

"No, I'm in earnest. I'm most accustomed to associating with the kind of hypocrites that pretend to be Christians, but you are not. You, on the contrary, pretend to be an infidel, while you are not."

"I'm not! Do you think I believe all this nonsense you are preaching about?"

"You must believe it in a way, when you live according to it."

"I?"

"Yes, just you. I've seen you turn away from the bed and wipe your eyes when you've seen a mother weep by her child's death-bed. Materialists don't do that. It is only Christians, or such as at any rate have some Christianity, who do that. What reason could there be for a materialist to feel compassion? I have seen it many a time—is it materialism that makes you attend poor patients gratis and bring them fruit and such things besides? Many a time you find some

pretext for not taking their money, so as not to hurt their feelings. You're so conscientious that you scarcely will undertake a difficult case if you think another can do it better. Is it materialism that has taught you to put personal considerations aside and to go to those who have nothing to pay with, before you go to those who have plenty?—Wait a little," he added, as he saw the doctor, with evident signs of anger, had risen and taken his hat. "You're not so busy now, are you?"

Dr. Spohr looked quite helpless. He was in truth quite angry. What did that ass of a parson understand of the ethics of physicians, the unwritten law that every doctor must follow, *nolens volens*? How could a doctor trouble himself with any show of sentimentality at death-beds or the like?

"It gives me pleasure, Mr. Welde, to find that you take such interest in my practice," he said. "If I should become so situated that I need a theological explanation of the fact that I'm not so successful as my colleague, Ebbesen—then I'll come to you, Mr. Welde—for then my case would be serious, very serious, indeed."

He stood already with his hand on the door-knob. Mr. Welde had stepped up to him and kept him back, almost by force.

"You must not leave like this, Dr. Spohr. Dear me, you must understand me—the only friend—real friend—I have around here. I only meant this, that you may reject the Christ on that painting, which is a work of art, and the historical Christ, and the dogmatic Christ; but the Christ I believe in and try to serve, why, I think you have more of Him—within you—than I have. Can't you understand it? Is it not possible for me to have some disease that I'm ignorant about, but which you, as a doctor, could prove that I

had? Is it anything to get angry about, if I, as a minister, could show you that you do not have a spiritual disease that you think you have?"

The minister was deeply moved; mainly because he understood that the doctor felt hurt. In his zeal he had run over him, as it were, stepped on him and wounded him. He understood it now. The doctor hesitated with his hand on the door-knob. The minister was surely well-meaning.

Welde was a fine young man and entirely different from the notions he had formed of ministers. He could not leave him in such a state of agitation; but on the other hand—. "Well, well! Good-bye, Welde! Must go. You don't know much about the ethics existing among doctors. Professional thieves, prize-fighters, and gamblers—all have their code of honor as well as the doctors, but that must not be confounded with religion. A doctor can't be sentimental. If we don't send a bill to a patient it is because we know we would not get any money anyway. The rest belongs to the profession. If you should happen to break an arm or a leg, remember me. I will set an arm for forty-five dollars—in Minneapolis they charge up to sixty-five, and I write out death certificates for a couple of dollars. Remember me if anything should happen along this line! Well, good-bye then."

Dr. Spohr left. He looked at his watch. How time flies! He had a typhus patient that he should have visited. It was best to go there at once and let supper wait till he got back.

That idiotic parson—to imagine that a doctor could concern himself about sympathy, kind-heartedness, or whatever it all was.—But Welde had a heart. "Let this same mind be in you," that was the way it was written. It was confoundedly easy to forget such things. Welde didn't have this "mind" as something

within him,—it was the mind that had grasped him so that he was floundering about and did not understand what it was. He had not grasped it; but it had grasped him so that the poor fish winced under it and became unfit for his work. Yes, that's the way it was.

But how could a doctor fare who'd fool with such things? There would be some wonderful diagnoses and some curious modes of treatment. One would have to prescribe a pint of cream and a piece of prune-pie six times a day for children and a pipeful of tobacco and a high-ball just as often for the men—so they might leave the doctor's office in a happy state of mind.

Ah, no! A doctor has to be a hardened materialist, who has no more regard for a sick person than a cobbler has for an old shoe that is to be repaired.

And then he stayed almost the whole night with his patient, who was a half-grown boy. The parents were poor; the mother was so tired out that he did not dare to let her watch another night. He therefore told her to lie down for a while, and he would wake her when he was ready to go. Hour after hour passed, but every time he was about to wake her and saw her tired and thin face, he felt that he must let her sleep a little longer. The worst of it was that he had not had any supper either. He heard them eating out in the kitchen and was almost tempted to go and ask for a bite; but perhaps they did not have more than they needed. So he sat and grumbled and muttered cusswords over the sick boy till it was past eleven o'clock. The only comfort was that the crisis was passed, so that he could tell the woman that the greatest danger was over.

But many times in the course of the evening and even when he was on his way home, he had to think of Rev. Mr. Welde, who understood so little of a doc-

tor's duties and wanted to make him out a child of God. He really had to laugh. The pastor meant it well, however. Why not let him occupy himself with his dreams? He did probably in some degree understand his own business, but that of the physician was certainly outside of his sphere of conception.

CHAPTER XII

At times Pastor Welde felt as if the work was growing beyond his capacities and assumed a scope that he could not quite control. He must try to guide it, however, tho his natural impulse bid him rather to drift along. Anxiety followed this growth. The young people poured a current of warm, living blood into the church-work. An impetus was given to both this and that. If it kept on like this, the church building would soon be altogether too small.

Then some of the older members began to think that perhaps it would be necessary to hold back a little. Thoughts that had not occupied them before, turned up: Was it really a desire to hear the Word of God that led so many young people to the church?

Mr. Welde was not afraid that the church would be too small. He was more afraid of being too small himself. It was one of his weaknesses that he always wished to see people happy. He seemed made to put the best construction on everything, and when people came to him with their stories and complaints he drifted into the path of the famous Herman von Bremenfeldt in Holberg's comedy—he thought both parties were right and sided with all that had anything to complain about. Among them were some that the old minister with his larger knowledge of the world would have shown the door with a severe lecture. A servant of the Lord should appear with strength and authority. Welde often repeated this to himself, but with a helpless sigh.

When he met people, he was always afraid that this one might be angry and that one sad—and so he had been going on like a dough-face, he thought—had

almost become an object of ridicule. But by the help of God he would try to present the truth with more force and earnestness after this.

He was getting ready for a funeral which was going to take place that afternoon. The story of the deceased man was very sad. He had been run over and killed while drunk. He had lived the life of a profligate and had been a poor support for his family. His old mother, who had come in from the country, had, however, wished to have her son buried from the church, and the minister had consented. The wife did not have a very good reputation either. Only the oldest child was baptized, and the family did not belong to the congregation. Here was an occasion to speak very seriously. He must strike a heavy blow at the dreadful vice of drunkenness with such an example before them.

The pastor knelt by his office-chair and prayed God to give him strength and wisdom to speak the truth as it should be spoken—unvarnished and in all its might.

— — — — —

When the large church-bell struck its dull tones on the afternoon of a week-day and proclaimed that the earthly remains of some fellow-being was to be carried to the cemetery, then there was a bustle going on in many of the homes. Women dressed in black, with hymnbooks and sometimes with a folded white handkerchief about the book, hurried out of the kitchen doors and waddled quietly off by twos and threes. They seldom failed at funerals. There was even a regular staff that never failed. They came prepared to weep. The old minister had been especially fine at funerals. When he addressed the mourners and spoke of the dear departed, whose steps should no more sound and whose voice should no more be heard in this life, and

the empty place at the table, or in the cradle, if it was a child, and the sad loss; then there was copious weeping. He had a way of tearing open the wounds that were still fresh so as to make them bleed in the presence of the congregation. Every half-smothered cry from the heart-broken mother or spouse brought out audible groans, and the suppressed sobs gave, as it were, a necessary accompaniment to his own voice, tearful as it was on such occasions.

Pastor Welde was different. He tried to make his sermon as short as possible and tried to hold back when he touched the tender, wounded hearts. He touched it so lightly that often the regular weeping squad had no use for their handkerchiefs. Well, one could not expect a young minister to have so much sympathy as the old minister had, thought the women. But when they put their unused handkerchiefs back in the bureau-drawer, it was with a blank feeling—as if they had been cheated out of something which they were entitled to.

The church was nearly filled with people when the minister arrived. The friendly, old parish-clerk, anxious to be on the safe side, told him again what kind of a man the deceased had been, and he expressed a hope that the pastor would make use of the opportunity to give a warning to the dead man's comrades and others like him. The pastor said that it was his intention to do so.

Now the pall-bearers came with the coffin. The mourners came after. They were not many. The bell ceased tolling. It seemed as if there was no ring in it, only the hard metal gave a sound. The singing was not what it ought to be either. It was merely so much sound from so many vocal chords. The only thing which sounded natural was the undertaker's whis-

pered directions to the pall-bearers. The coffin was cheap, very cheap. The minister noticed that.

At the sigh of the cheap coffin a voice seemed to awaken within him. He had his sermon ready. It seemed like a long thread that he had to keep in order. "Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God." That was the text. He clung to it. "Such a plain coffin," said the voice. "Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God"—. "Only a couple of small wreaths—scarcely any flowers," said the voice. "Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God." The minister forced himself to go on. "Here we see the dreadful effect of sin."—"They must be very poor," said the voice. "Here a soul was hurled into eternal darkness, a soul which had chosen sin and had received the wages of sin." "That pale woman, who coughs so, is presumably his wife," said the voice.— "She is so poorly dressed;—but she has evidently put on the best she has," continued the voice. "The two little girls." The minister roused himself with great effort: "One who had rejected the mercy of God and instead of the church and the precious blood of Christ, had chosen the liquor and the saloon."—"The old woman is the mother, poor thing," said the voice.

His sermon went to pieces. The thread was torn into shreds. He had noticed how the old woman sat and rocked herself to and fro, while they were singing. She was a believing woman. He would name her specially as a mother, who had done her duty and could meet at the judgment-seat, knowing she had been a good mother, who had carried her son before the Lord on the arms of prayer.— "Now the old mother is crying too," said the voice,— "She weeps over her poor boy and the judgment he is to get both here and hereafter," it continued.

Welde turned half aside and closed his eyes. His

sermon seemed snatched away. In vain he tried to pick up the pieces. He could have said a thousand things—if only the one woman would stop her coughing and the other cease her weeping—and if only the little girls had not been there—"to hear you proclaim that their father is in hell," said the voice within him.

The pastor shrank from his task. He could probably have said what he had intended to say if the coffin had been very expensive and had been carried in by big-bellied, red-nosed saloon-keepers, he thought.

The singing had ceased.

Mr. Welde stepped forward and offered a short, almost indistinct prayer. When he was thru, he stood a moment and stared helplessly before him. Some small pieces of paper containing his notes were crushed together in the hollow of his hand. He opened the Bible and read, as it seemed, a chapter of random. It was about Jesus who raised the widow's son of Nain from the dead. He read with an effort that was still more marked when he began to preach.

"We are gathered here," he said, "to bury one of our Norwegian countrymen, who was run over—or that we, I mean, had the misfortune to run over, so we are in a way to blame for his lying here in this cheap coffin, with only a few flowers—. I for my part regret that I was not thoughtful enough to send some flowers and—well, it is customary, when one has done nothing for a person while he was living to send some beautiful flowers to place on the coffin. I should have brought a large wreath, for I did not do a single thing for this man while he still lived."

The stillness of death reigned in the church. The old parish-clerk was bringing a glass of water to the widow, who had the bad cough; he stopped halfway, holding the glass in his hand.

Welde continued his sermon. He spoke only about

himself. All that he might have done for this man that he had not done. He had seen the saloons standing in this man's path and had done nothing. He had seen the glasses emptied in respectable gatherings, but he had not said much. He had known how intoxicating liquors led people to ruin, but he had taken no action. Even if he did not know this man personally, he had known there were such—and had passed by like the priest and the Levite. It could neither comfort nor excuse him, that he was not the only one who had passed by, he said.

For the first time he spoke at length. He saw the many faces turned toward him. No one wept, but the silence was death-like; it was only broken now and then by the sick widow's hacking cough. The many upturned faces were the jury—he was his own accuser. He knew very well that they too were guilty. If he had acted the role of the priest then they had acted that of the Levite,—but could the priest accuse the Levite? The priest had had the first opportunity. Welde warmed to his subject. He turned to his text. It was a widow's son who was dead,—actually dead as this man in the coffin, and all had said: "Weep, weep, mother! all hope is gone." But Jesus had compassion on the mother and raised her son from the dead, so that she who thought she had lost him, had him again. Perhaps people had not acted the way they should have done toward this mother and her boy, but Jesus knew why He raised him from the dead. He wanted to make her happy,—He felt sorry for her. He had a mother Himself who was dear to Him, and no one understood the mother's heart the way He did. To us He had said: "Judge not!" When He did judge, he used a measure different from that of men. The one who stood lowest would be bid to go up higher—the one who was highest told to take

the lowest place, and the one who gave least gave most. In a case like this it was best for each and every one to repeat the Publican's humble prayer: "God, be merciful to me a sinner."

Pastor Welde grew eloquent. The old woman's eyes shone with a strange light as she turned them to the speaker. The widow sat a little more erect, she wiped the tear-stained faces of the children, and hushed the smallest one, who began to cry. The pastor closed with an earnest warning to all to be prepared—not to judge others, but to be judged themselves; for we must all appear before the judgment seat of God, before the Father who seeth in secret and rewards openly. Our greatest concern should be to be ready when our time comes and the shades of night are drawing nigh. Instead of offering a prayer, he folded his hands and repeated the following lines by the Danish poet Ingemann:

*Be with us when day is waning,
Thou Father of love and light;
Stay with us when darkness poureth
Out from the windows of night.*

*Spread out over mountain and valley
Thy garment of stars, then we
So soundly will close our eyelids
And slumber safely with Thee.*

When the coffin was opened, Welde went down to see the corpse. It nearly gave him a shock when he saw the hard features and the broken nose. When the people had passed around the coffin and the two women went over to it, the old woman put her bony hand under the chin of her dead boy and stroked his cheek. "Good-bye my boy, good-bye. You must meet me at the gate. I'll not be long in coming." The pastor had to turn away. The widow wept silently.

She had to be helped out. The two little girls cried, and the little one that she carried on her arm also cried.

There were not many that went to the cemetery; but when the church had emptied its contents into the street and the black stream had filtered out to where it came from; then there was a lot of talk about the minister's sermon and about him who lay in the coffin with the drunkard's broken nose.

Here would have been an opportunity to give the drunkards a proper warning—and it turned out—almost the opposite, one might say. Still he had spoken better this time than he had two weeks ago, when one of the elders of the congregation was buried.

How different from the old minister!

CHAPTER XIII

A feeling of depression settled on Pastor Welde on his way home from the funeral. Again he had failed and had let his feelings run away with him. The sight of an old, wrinkled face, the sound of a hacking cough—and he seemed fettered, he had weakened and had forgotten what he owed both his calling and his God. Forgotten—would he had forgotten! The worst thing was that he had felt all the time that this man had met an unhappy death, that he was not saved. Would his mother come upon the judgment day and say: “You gave me a false hope! Where is my son?” Would other mothers come forward and say: “You spoke as if there were hope. Where are our sons?” Besides this the minister had an uncomfortable feeling of having departed from what he had been taught and what he was pledged to preach.

These thoughts haunted him after he reached his study. There was mail for him, but he did not touch it. He began to pace the floor as was his habit. One must harden himself. One must speak the truth, even if it be with a bleeding heart. The doctor cannot let it affect him that the patient whimpers. The diseased members must be amputated; the aching tooth must be extracted. It was perhaps the greatest kindness,—to run the knife right into the dangerous boil, whether the patient was rich or poor. Compassion can sometimes be cruel.

He stopped before the picture. There stood Jesus. His face was very serious. “What is truth?” Pilate had asked. This grave face was the answer. Christ was severe. He was the truth, and He knows no devious ways. The truth does not walk on tip-toe and can-

not consider the feelings of people, even if those same people are to be pitied. If Jesus had been tolerant and had made it a point to consider people's feelings, then He would not have stood there.

"He would not have been there?" he repeated as if in surprise. The conclusion he had arrived at rebounded upon him in the form of a question. The answer came instantly: Yes, certainly He stood there! It was just because He was considerate that He stood there. "What is truth?" Should he, Conrad Walther Welde, also ask such a question? Christ was the truth—it was not something that He rendered homage to or had appropriated—some fact or such thing adhered to. He was the truth. Therefore, exactly for that reason, he could make allowances without departing from the truth. Did he send anyone away? Did he preach about their misery—and get people to weep over their own misery? He had Himself wept some days previous, but that was over a large and magnificent city, that none but He could think of weeping over. Did He ever use the wretched as a text? Did He not place His hands on the sick and heal them? Did He make a show at their sores and say: "Will not this make you, gentlemen, vomit?" Or did He say: "Here you see the consequences?" Did He make thundering speeches against the leprous, the palsied, those possessed by evil spirits, the blind and the lame? No. If He had done that, then the Jews, or at any rate the Pharisees, would not have crucified Him. They would have been fond of hearing how good they were and that misery and sickness was the just punishment of sin,—that one should not hide under a bushel. Those who mourn should be comforted. He made no reservations or said that there were exceptions. How about the sheep that had strayed and was suffering? He made no speech to the ninety and nine, nor did He

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picture to them how the lost sheep was suffering and how it really got its deserts. He did not dwell on the sad results of going astray either. He only left the whole flock and suffered Himself so that the one who was lost should not suffer. The ninety and nine did not understand this. It was contrary to all reason that He should consider the one in distress to be of greater importance than the ninety and nine that were comfortable. The Jews were awaiting a king who could lift the proud banner of the Maccabees, drive away the Romans, and establish a mighty kingdom ruled by the Jews. And instead of this He came to save the lost, such as were given up and cast on the scrap-pile as it were, such as otherwise must perish. Instead of making for the throne of David He started for the swill-cans and garbage boxes of society. That which was rejected by man was exactly what He could make use of. Yes, that was the way He was.—What was the trouble with that man Conrad Walther Welde? He wanted to be Caesar's friend and to please everybody. However, there was one consolation: Jesus would not have gone to church to hear about the sin of this man who lay in the coffin, while his wife and two children and old mother were there. He would surely have comforted both the mother and the widow;—but then the corpse lay there with unmistakable marks from the last debauch,—Christ had not spared His own mother from a greater agony.—

The old and sensible parish-clerk had probably been right after all. He had shaken his head and said: "That funeral sermon was a rather unfortunate one, I believe."

Still the pastor felt somewhat easier in his mind, for in the midst of his process of reasoning he had in a way felt safe, like a cashier who, even tho he cannot

make his accounts balance, still knows that he is not an embezzler.

When the pastor turned to his mail, he found something else to think about. Among other letters there was also one from Paris. He turned the blue envelope from side to side. He knew the hand-writing, and his heart beat violently. It was from Maggie.

He curbed himself, however, and opened it leisurely.

It was from her—from Maggie! It was from her. He glanced hastily over it, and his eye caught some foreign names—and—

He began reading with remarkable composure. She said she had written him several letters. She wrote one in St. Louis before she left. She had torn that in small pieces. Then she wrote another, and that she tore into still smaller bits. Then she had scribbled some words on the train, and this letter was burned in the fireplace in Windsor hotel in New York. Later she wrote one aboard the "Deutschland" that was to be mailed in Hamburg. It had followed her to Paris and had burned there. She had been sorry that she had not sent those letters, and this letter was the expression of her regret.

Yes, it was Maggie. He thought he saw her half-roguish face turned laughingly, as it used to be when she turned toward him from the easel when she was mixing the colors on her palette. That was the way she looked when she wrote this.

He read on. She had been fortunate and had had many orders for paintings. The newspapers had mentioned her and—she believed she might say—that she was one of those who were envied. Her fortune was made, in so far as it consisted in daubing faces together in such a way that homely people became good-looking and still looked like themselves. That was

the real art and had to be learned in Paris. Her future was now secure.

Welde read all this with interest. They had talked so much about this, and it had really been his opinion that portrait painters should make ugly people good-looking and still bring out the likeness. She had always made fun of him and said that is was impossible, and he had said that for her nothing was impossible, and that she never should have the chance to paint his picture if she did not learn to do this.

Then she had been after him with a wet brush with which to paint his face, and she had chased him around easels and rows of half-finished paintings to a barricaded position behind a chair.

A warm current passed thru his whole body. From his breast it passed thru his shoulders and the back of his neck so that even his ears grew warm. It was Maggie who wrote thus to him. He continued:

Really she should have written this letter with the left hand. She was angry with the right hand, for it had once written Yes, when it should have written No. She had once received a letter of proposal from a big, queer Norwegian theologian who asked for a refusal instead of her hand. She had been waiting for him, but he was so dreadfully slow and fearfully deliberate and reserved. So in order to start him a little—perhaps—she had offended him by being nice to someone else and—well, then that letter came and she had become provoked and angry. She planned to go to Paris and had been prophesied a future, a great future perhaps, by people who understood art, as for example Prof. Sargent, Augustus Eddy, and many others. But she had also had her dreams, and the same hand that did the painting also did the writing. She had often been angry with it and had struck it with the mahlstick and with the brush-handles and

other things when she sat and worked—and there was no one sitting back of her, criticising her and telling her that she did not make people handsome enough. She had been so angry with that hand that she had taken all the rings away from it and put them on the left hand—and told it that it would never get any ring—if—Welde's heart beat violently and his eyes did not see plainly—if—she wrote, a certain big, fair and strong Norwegian Lutheran theologian did not send one—even if it were ever so plain.

His eyes read mechanically on. She made enough money for two. They might travel thru Switzerland to Italy in the winter, perhaps they might even visit the Holy Land with all its interesting scenes. The following summer they'd go to Norway. "Her ships had come in at last," whatever else was lacking, she wrote. She also had inherited some money. She had especially longed to see Norway, the land they had so often talked about and where he had not been either. Then—in a couple of years—across the Pacific back home, where they would settle down in peace and quiet and—he would need do nothing in the world, except to worship her and they would be the happiest people in the whole wide, wide world.

Pastor Welde rose and began to pace the floor. He would allow himself to think of nothing but her. His happiness surged like warm waves thru him. Maggie was his.

He had to do something. Yes, he would arrange all the volumes for the book-binder. It was a task he had dreaded. Then he remembered that there were more letters. He opened and read them and put them away. Then he arranged the different numbers and tried to be industrious. He wanted to think of Maggie but could not gather his thoughts. He imagined he was perfectly calm, but while he was arranging the

volumes and papers, he caught himself humming the refrain of a song that the student quartet at college so often had sung:

*Come where my love lies dreaming,
Dreaming the happy hours away,
Come where my love lies dreaming,
Yes, is sweetly dreaming the happy hours away.*

It had been sung as a solo and by a quartet. The whole song was little more than this. The same words in ecstatic tones of joy, repeated o'er and o'er. He hummed and whistled while he worked—and little by little it all rose before him as in a warm and luminous ray of light: Maggie, Italy, Norway, Palestine—his dreams, all his wildest dreams—to be realized. The blue letter was the key to all these fairy kingdoms where the two—he and she—belonged. He paced the floor again. He must go outside. But when he put his hand on the door he remembered that he could not go out in his shirt-sleeves, so he put on his coat, then took it off again. No, he must get out. The fresh air acted as a tonic. He felt so warm and buoyant. Now he was only going to think of Maggie, but somehow he could not quite grasp it. He tried to picture their meeting—it drifted away as a mist. Their wedding—it was like serving coffee inside the chancel of the church. She, his wife—Maggie his wife; Mrs. Welde: The ladies' aid will meet, God willing, next Thursday afternoon at the home of Mrs. Welde. There was something about it that did not fit at all. It sounded utterly impossible.

But she loved him; wanted to be all in all for him, as he wanted to be all for her. How he had dreamt about this! Not a day had passed, these last three years, that he had not dreamt of her and her sweet and

laughing mouth and her eyes with a warm and intelligent and still a bit saucy gleam in them.

He sauntered about a long time. He carefully selected streets where he believed he might be most undisturbed and left in peace with his own thoughts. But all of a sudden he found he was not thinking of Maggie at all. He only went along and hummed the refrain: "Come where my love lies dreaming" in all possible and impossible keys. He even caught himself imagining that he sang with the voice of the best tenor in the college. It was of course a mere delusion, and dishonest also in a way, to borrow the voices of others to sing with—inside of oneself. Now and then he met acquaintances and greeted them and talked about the weather, or was asked what he thought about the weather and would give a "Fine, fine!" born of conviction, in return. When someone passed him a careless "How do you do" or "How are you," he would get a warm, "Fine, fine, how are *you*" in return.

He strode along and came to a street where a small, low church lay squeezed in. He saw it across the street, without remembering at the moment that it was Mosevig's church. 'Wasn't it Mosevig who was repairing the steps? He was down on all fours and had overalls on. Now he put in a nail and was hunting for another in an old tool box. A girl crossed the yard and went over to the fence to speak to him. She had perhaps been washing dishes, for her sleeves were turned up and—she was dressed very shabbily and had a pale and dusky face with a pair of eyes like two black spots—but she was far from homely—and he heard a merry laugh. He had stopped quite involuntarily and she had seen him. She was perhaps laughing at him. He was afraid that Mosevig would turn around and greet him just then. It was stupid of him

to stop. He felt that Mosevig would have felt humbled if he should go and speak to him now, so he went on. He turned and looked back, however—then he saw a pair of eyes—.

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He was at home again.

Well, well! If only Maggie had been poor, so that he could have done something for her. But then she would not have been Maggie either. He really was not needed anywhere. He had strength and a desire to take hold—a consuming eagerness to lift heavy things and whatever was down and out. In the congregation, however, everything was in working order, his theology was safe and sound, the house was spick and span, the meals were prepared—Jorgina did everything in the house and was offended because she did not have more duties. Brooten ruled the congregation, Mrs. Thompson the ladies' aid, and Deacon Svale the Sunday School. There was not much left for him to do, except to endorse it all, and on festive occasions express the thanks of the congregation and preside at the business meetings of the church. It was strange that he should be so situated, who was so strong—for he had the strength even if he could not make use of it. But how about the young people's society?—well, that was at least something.

His glance reached the letter on the table. There it lay, and it was no dream either. He opened a drawer where he kept some photographs of her. He looked at them, but none was just like her. No, photographs wouldn't do. Only a good portrait painter could bring out the soul or reflect something of the soul in a picture. But the letter was from Maggie and the room seemed filled with it: all else had lost its vital importance. The journey to Norway—he and she. Italy with its many associations and large collections

of art, the blue Mediterranean, Greece, and Palestine—where Jesus had wandered about with His disciples. How often as a child had he not dreamt of these places—the place where Jesus had wandered when He was here on earth. All this he would get from Maggie, and he would also get her; and when he got her, he got all the other things with her. All he was asked to do was to worship her—nothing more would be asked of him.

“All these things will I give thee, if thou fall down and worship me.”

—It came like a slap in his face.

He had again stepped up to the picture of Christ before Pilate. Yes, there he stood—once Jesus had also stood on a high mountain and had seen all the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them, and someone had said: “All these things will I give Thee if Thou wilt fall down and worship me.” That was quite different from standing here among the rabble, despised and mocked and with a most painful death before His eyes.

What was Maggie—after all? She loved him because he was big and had a muscular body. He had been told that he would attract attention on a boulevard. Maggie saw him with an artist’s eye. She was ambitious, and he supposed she had to be so if she was to make her way with an artist’s brush.

And he—Conrad Walther Welde—should be her worshiper—an article for exhibition and of no use whatever except to “worship” her. But, of course, it was only said as a joke. Well, he might continue to stay here, where they really did not seem to have much use for him. But Jesus—why, there were not many who thought they needed Him either. “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me!” He cried, as He hung on the cross. As the Son of Man He per-

haps felt that His labor had been in vain. Even Peter had denied Him.

So it was not absolutely sure that one's labor was in vain, even if one might think so himself.

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"Jorgina!"

"What is it?"

"I have had no coffee this afternoon."

"No, you attended the funeral, and now supper is ready."

"That's good, I'm hungry as a bear."

He went into the kitchen and stood with his back against the edge of the open door.

"Listen now, Jorgina," he said, as he stood and swung the door. "I saw in a paper a story about a fox who was caught in a trap."

"Caught in a trap?"

"Yes, in a fox-trap, and then the fox gnawed his leg off—."

"Gnawed his leg off?—Well, I declare, I've never heard—."

"Yes, he gnawed his leg off to get loose."

"Well, now I've never—Can anyone do that?"

"Of course they can—both men and beasts."

"Men also? But they don't get their legs into fox-traps, do they?"

"Oh, it might happen, Jorgina, but what I wanted to know is this: Do you think the fox will gain, or will he lose by gnawing his leg off?"

"It must hurt dreadfully."

"We can't consider that."

"Well, he wanted to save his hide, and I suppose that is the most important for the fox," Jorgina laughed.

The minister laughed also, but he added more seriously: "Well, this is exactly what I wanted to ask

some sensible person about," and then he went back to his study.

Jorgina laughed again.

—If a fox gnawed his leg off—a fox in a trap. What a question! There are, as she had said, two kinds of questions. First, those that there is sense in, and then those that there is no sense in.

Well, they had so much to study about, these pastors who were to preach every Sunday. Pastor Wangel of the Synod had studied till he got a pain in his back, and Pastor Nelson of the United studied till he forgot the names of his children. It was not strange that they asked questions. But what could she, a simple, untaught woman, answer? A fox that gnawed his leg off—she laughed again. Still it might be that Pastor Welde meant something by this talk.

CHAPTER XIV

Autumn had come. The elm and oak trees out in the garden shook off their faded leaves. The two large poplars that seemed to stand as guards outside the fence kept up bravely. The old minister had called them his altar lights. The wind played with the dry leaves and swept them about, rolled them about in heaps, again scattered and danced about with them. Among the brown leaves a white piece of paper is whirled. It rose up, stood on edge, crouched a moment as if to watch its chance, then danced away still more wildly than the leaves it had been together with over to the fence and then alongside of it like a frightened bird in a cage. Now it suddenly dashes against the trunk of a tree as if it would try to get up into it and thus get away. Then it lies still; its strength is spent; it cares for nothing now. it only lies there trembling. But no, off again, with the dry leaves in pursuit! The wind will not let it alone—there it's actually going up the wall. Jorgina ought to see that pieces of paper are dancing about in the minister's yard. Such things surely did not happen either at Wangel's of the Synod or at Nelson's of the United.

Pastor Welde, who had just returned from a sick call, stood smiling at the gate and watched the piece of paper. He went and stuck the point of his umbrella thru it. "Keep quiet and come with me—you are arrested," he said. He took it and looked at it. It was a piece of his own writing paper. It was dated and contained only one line. It was a letter that he had begun in his own large and distinct hand:

"Dear Maggie:—"

A half suppressed sigh escaped him. How could this have gotten outside? He crushed the paper in his hand and was going to throw it out into the street. He bethought himself, however, and carried it with him into the house. There was a fire in the fireplace now.

Maggie Cornell's letter still lay unanswered in the drawer of the minister's writing desk. It was a source of constant self-reproach to him. Time and again he had settled down to write to her, but he never got further than the salutation.

"Dear Miss Cornell!"

Here he had come to a dead stop. He never got any further. He was highly pleased with the heading and could sit and look caressingly on this "Dear!" But the heading stood like a stopper, shutting out what should follow. He had tried "Miss Maggie," "Miss Cornell," and "Miss Maggie Cornell," with a "Dear Madam" following it. The latter was quite impossible. He had long since given up "Dear Maggie," which he first tried. "Dear Miss Cornell"—that drew the line between them. Yet he could get no further.

For the twentieth time he sat helpless and looked hungrily at this salutation of his. Before him lay the sheet of paper, clean and white. His thoughts circled about this clean and white paper. It was as if something familiar, something of his own—something that said all that was to be said was encompassed in this "Dear Miss Cornell" at the top of the page.

He reflected with a certain sadness that he had bedecked many a sheet of paper with his big letters. He had been flush with paper and busy with his pen, but all about something outside of himself. For instance, the letters to his home—they were for his

parents. The others were business letters or letters of friendship. The sermons were for the congregation. He had been given only one sheet to fill—just one paper, and on this he had written only three words—all else was either too much or too little.

So he was stuck there and could get no further.

They rose before him: His old father who cherished such great expectations in regard to him, his place at the altar when he was officiating, his clerical vows—and then the congregation. They were in reality kindly people all of them. When they greeted him and when he talked with them, they always seemed glad to see him. There was so much to do. There were always some sick people that lay listening for his footsteps—at least they said so—and then there was the young people's society that would be scattered to the winds. There were so many poor that would be forgotten, and there were also rich people who had their sorrows and needed consolation and encouragement.

His eye met the picture on the wall. He was so used to looking at it now, and it was so large that it always caught the eye. Especially did the central figure command attention. It might be well to have such a picture to look at when one saw nothing else—no way out—and was thoroly perplexed.

And then, he continued in his thoughts, especially for one like himself, who was irresolute and loath to say no; who carried a weak will in a strong body: it might be well to look at that picture. There stood the Savior that he, Conrad Walther Welde, had promised to follow—forsaken and alone among all these deluded people that were filled with hatred—all were against Him. Where were now all those that He had helped? The ten lepers at one time, the blind, the lame, the sick, the thousands He had fed when they were hungry. Were they among those who cried

“Crucify Him?” James had fled, John had fled, Peter was ready to deny Him on being questioned by a maid. Well, perhaps it was the very fact that the question came from a maiden’s lips that was fatal to Peter. But Jesus was forsaken and was brought before a civil tribunal, to be judged by other laws and other conditions than those which concerned Him and His Kingdom. Was it not so in our times, too? Were there not many who denied Him in their lives if not with their lips? Denying with the lips was not the worst. It was the very ones who had confessed Him with their lips that had hid themselves most completely. When the pinch came and they were needed, they were gone. And among others that sneaked away—the champions of the faith, who stood and made themselves comfortable by the fire in the court of the high priest’s palace, while Jesus, mocked and reviled, was led past, was also Conrad Walther Welde—the man with the long name—yes, with long legs also. He would say to Maggie: “You know I had to choose you.” To his father and mother: “I had to give up my calling for Maggie.” To his church: “I feel myself unfit and not equal to the work of taking care of my charge.” It was best to fib a little to his church. To the congregation, the flock he was set to take care of: “I love you very much and regret that I cannot serve you any longer, as circumstances demand that I give up my work as a minister.” It was best to stuff them with a really big lie.

Then a dream of his childhood came before him. In his home his father had talked with his colleagues about the prevailing unbelief, about the laxness in life and doctrine, even within Lutheran congregations. He had spoken of the gloomy outlook for the Church of Christ—the attacks on it from without and the undermining of it from within—then he, Conrad Welde,

had doubled his small fists. When he grew big he would go out and fight like the crusaders of old. With a well-directed thrust of his lance he would fell to the ground one after another of the enemy's mighty warriors. From the hard-pressed Lutheran Church could be heard a great shout of joy. Who was it? Who is it? He would turn his horse so they could see who it was: Conrad Walther Welde—the son of the minister.

That was the time when he had imagined it as a battle with gleaming weapons, as in the crusades, or the Thirty Years' War. Now all this had passed, but he remained, the young Pastor Welde—so afraid of offending anyone, polite, humble, loath to strike, because he might hurt someone.

But—here—on the other hand—stood Maggie.

It was she, only she—only a rather impetuous girl—with no claim on him but this, that she wanted him. He could do but little for her, while she stood ready to do a great deal for him, only for him. There were travels in foreign countries, all kinds of enjoyments—all just for the two of them. She would give him all this if she only could have him—for herself alone. And how gladly—oh, how gladly would he not accept. This smiling maiden-face, these laughing eyes weighed heavily in the scale, tho the smile was fleeting and the eyes could not laugh always. It was but a passing thought, but it clung to him and unnerved his hand when he wanted to strike her with it. Yes, that was what he meant to do, but he did not have strength enough to do it.

And how could he strike? The hand only wanted to caress. He longed to stroke her hair, put his arm about her and draw her jubilantly to his heart.

“All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.”

The old cowardice! Tears in those beautiful eyes that met him with a laugh, even in the letter. Perhaps she would, in wounded pride, throw herself into the maelstrom of the fashionable world, where the thought of him had perhaps kept her from going under. Would she perhaps be lost in it? Had he not himself put these thoughts into her head? Was there not responsibility in this, too?

But even if it were so? "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" If she offered him the whole world—and that she did in a way—what would it profit him if he lost his soul?

And that would be the result if he left the work to which he was called—if he ran away from his post or went to sleep at his station.

But, perhaps this "lose his soul" was a mere phrase? There was something back of it that let him suspect that to push Maggie away from him, ~~that~~ was indeed to lose his soul. He scarcely dared to think about it.

He wondered if there was not also some egotism about it. He had begun to be—or felt himself to be **somebody** now. He was attached to his congregation and the work and shrank from giving it up, now it seemed so promising.

It was perhaps cowardice. When she showed him all the glory of the earth and said: "All this will I give thee," then he was too timid to receive and too cowardly to say, "Get thee hence, Maggie."

"Dear Maggie!"

He had a large enough body—and strength. He rose and began to practice some gymnastic feats with his arms. The Lord had certainly given him a good body, even if he had made little use of it. He looked searchingly about the room for something heavy on

which he could try his strength. There stood the sofa. Before him stood a picture of two men panting with exertion, as they carried it from the furniture wagon. He bent down, took hold of the head-end and put it against his breast. It certainly was heavy. He felt how the muscles in his arms and back were knotted and it fairly tingled up his back. The blood rushed into his face, as he lifted the whole sofa from the head-end. He let it fall down again and pulled it out and examined it on all sides. He took hold of the middle, lifted it up and held it there a little while. Then he remembered that he had seen an expressman carry one on his back. He set it on end, put his back under it and lifted it. It was not heavy. He let it thump a little. When he was to set it down it came down with a bump—more from excitement than carelessness, for in the doorway stood Jorgina, with both hands lifted: "God in heaven!" she exclaimed, but could get no further. She looked as if she might faint when she saw the minister standing in his office with the sofa on his back, while the sweat poured down his face.

It took some moments for Welde to collect his thoughts. He was red and hot. "I'm trying my strength," he said eagerly. "No one knows how strong I am; I can lift that sofa like nothing. Sit down in that chair—no, the other one is stronger. Now, then, don't be afraid, only sit still. Now we'll lift both Jorgina and the chair, and on straight arms too."

Jorgina screamed aloud and laughed and clung to the chair when he lifted it. Her short, breathless laugh was heard thru all the rooms as she passed on to the kitchen. If Welde wasn't crazy, he soon would be. But there he was, a mere boy—so to speak—and such might be up to both this and that. It was fortunate that he had an old person about—or if not just

"old," an **elderly** person at any rate. It was not always the years that counted either. Jorgina's wrinkled hands went up to her cheeks. They were warm. She tied her apron strings tighter about her.

Pastor Welde drew long breaths as he sat in his office. The perspiration had begun to pour down on account of the violent exertion, and he had to sit down and wipe it away from hand and face. He had recovered his balance and looked at the sofa with a satisfied air. Why had he not thought of this before?

That big, flat, lazy, lifeless thing. It really tempted one to indolence. He went and lay down on it and stretched himself with keen enjoyment. For once he felt bodily tired, and that was a most pleasurable sensation.

He lay there quite a while with his hands under his head. It was only foolishness this notion about his heart not being strong; a pretext so as to make a minister out of him. If there was anything that needed a strong heart, it was the pastor's work. Thru the open window came a fresh breeze filled with the odor of dead and decaying plant-life.

CHAPTER XV

Thruout the autumn and winter the membership of the congregation had greatly increased, and the attendance at the services was very good. Pastor Welde was happy. The spiritual battles that he had fought alone in his study had deepened his sensibilities. He still prepared his sermons with the same care as before, tho as a speaker he could not be compared with the old minister. The growing congregation gave him a higher standing with those outside. At the spring election, when the no-license question came up, he was the leader in the fight. At a mass meeting he spoke in German to the Germans, after first having given the opening speech in English and addressed his own countrymen in the Norwegian language. No wonder that American pastors were struck with amazement.

The newspapers praised him. The best circles in society were open to him, and even Brooten, the bank president, felt rather insignificant by the side of the popular preacher.

In Welde himself no change could be seen. He was irreproachable and precise in his manner, he took his usual walks and greeted all with the same consideration.

It had, however, given some offence that he would give a party for such people as Ole Narvesen and his wife and Mrs. Andrew Thompson and her husband. Everybody knew what kind of a man Ole was—or rather had been. Now he was the president of the newly organized temperance society, and he already prided himself on being better than others. They knew, however, thank God, what he **had** been, and

such could not be very suitable company for Pastor Welde. Then there was Dr. Spohr, who was both a free-thinker and a free-mason. That the pastor often spent whole evenings there, till late at night—why, they all knew that; but what he did there—that was a different thing.

Furthermore he had taken part in the work of the total abstinence society. That some of the reformed drunkards in the church had become conceited was bad enough, and now those drunkards that were left had only grown worse. In this society there were even Baptists and Methodists; some that were not baptized at all and others that had been baptized ever so many times. He had spoken there and had even brought the excellent church choir there. He had wanted them to have the basement of the church for their meetings, but thank God, they had prevented that. Brooten did not want any politics in the church.

However, as long as the congregation prospered, it was all right. That solid plug kept the discontent from getting out. All agreed that he had a way of drawing people.

But still the discontent lay there preying in secret. There were men in the congregation who formerly had given fifty dollars a year and who, under the old minister's regime, had for that reason been highly esteemed. Now they felt themselves slighted and put in the background for a fellow like Ole Narvesen, who scarcely ever had paid his minimum contribution of two dollars a year. In return they cut down their own contributions and put themselves down for six or twelve dollars a year, so in spite of the growth of the congregation the treasury was at low ebb. The elders in the church shrugged their shoulders and glanced sadly and knowingly at each other. It was this temperance society and the young people's society

with all their festivals and fandangoes that drew the money from the people so they soon would have nothing left to sustain the Church of God.

Welde understood nothing of this. He saw only friendly, respectful faces. He lived and breathed in all this prosperity. Only he felt himself unworthy to count this as his work. He firmly believed that it was the seed, the Word of God, that brought forth fruit, and he was glad that he was permitted to work and care for this as well as he knew how. His days were full of sunshine.

Mosevig had been doing poorly during the winter, and the situation grew worse and worse. They had a siege of sickness, and when they had passed thru that he had difficulty in gathering his flock again. They paid their part of the minister's salary but attended Welde's church. Some lived nearer to that church, others had different excuses.

It gave Mr. Welde an almost physical pain to meet Pastor Mosevig on the street. The bony fingers grew more bent, the clothes still more shabby. Once, when he was seated next to Mosevig on the platform at a no-license meeting, he had noticed that a piece had been set in at the elbow of his black coat. It could plainly be seen that no tailor had done it. Perhaps his wife had patched it. Welde felt a choking sensation. It was considered a big thing in every family, he thought, for Mosevig to be invited to sit on the platform of the largest American church in town. Then his wife had tried her hand on tailoring and had mended the coat so that her husband might be presentable. Perhaps she was in the audience and had seen that he had noticed the patch.

He had at first been seated by the side of Judge Steward, who presided at the meeting; but he had moved his chair and seated himself by Mosevig. The

Norwegian pastors ought to sit together, but Mosevig had moved away a little. He had looked at him and had had that same half-timid and helpless expression on his face that Welde had noticed before. He understood it now. Mosevig had felt embarrassed by his seating himself beside him. He seemed quite lost in his old coat—in spite of all the pains his wife had taken with it. Welde would have spoken to him—as to a companion, so all could see that they were brother clergymen, but there was something that commanded respect in these shabby and thread-bare clothes. Welde felt himself despised in his fine clothes—and rightfully, too. Did they not preach the same Word of God? Did they not serve the same Master?

The worst of all was to hear Mosevig sigh and mumble something with that big protruding mouth back of the thin, sparse beard. Something was working within this man—something that hurt, hurt dreadfully, which God in His heaven heard and saw.

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He could not get rid of him. Mosevig appeared before his inner consciousness when he stood in the pulpit, when he was in the young people's society, on the street, and when he was comfortably seated at Dr. Spohr's playing whist with him and his Danish wife, who could play "dummy" with great bravado and prepare platefuls of the most delicious sandwiches, which they in Danish fashion would nibble at while playing. The maid would serve coffee later on—Mosevig appeared again.

Welde sometimes dreamt about him—that he was wrestling with him for his very life. He saw the furious and contorted face—he tried to hold him fast, to show him how strong he was. Then Mosevig seemed to vanish, and it was only a child—a helpless

child, worn out with weeping, that he had wrestled with.

Once he dreamed that he was officiating at the altar. The church was filled. The choir did not get in with the response, "And with Thy spirit," properly. He glanced up to where they were standing and saw only a woman with a child in her arms. When he looked at the audience, he saw no people—only clothes. There lay coats and hats, ladies' coats and shawls—the seats were filled with clothes, but down by the door Mosevig stood and smote himself upon his breast, saying: "God, be merciful to me a sinner." In his dream Welde had felt that Mosevig did this to accuse him and he wanted to go down to him and lead him up to the altar—he wanted to be magnanimous. But he got his feet entangled in the clothes and fell. The clothes grew in large heaps about him so he had to climb over them. There were clothes, clothes everywhere. Then he understood that this was not the church—he was submerged in Wilburg and Thompson's large clothing store and Mosevig was the only one that could help him. He lay there struggling and was nearly choked—and awoke covered with cold perspiration.

He remembered also another dream. He was in Norway—he knew it must be Norway. It was Independence Day and he was to speak. He was willing, too, but not prepared. He could not think of anything to say, but with his anxiety over this a great joy was mingled. He was in the land of his childhood dreams, where all, even the children, could speak Norwegian. The sun was warm and his heart was filled with thanksgiving. The Stars and Stripes were floating from every hill-top and the hills were like large, grass covered bluffs. The roads were bad, and he had to climb over large stone walls and he did not under-

stand how people could get anywhere. Then he found himself standing on a wall so high that he could not get down. He became alarmed, for he was to make a speech. There was a large gathering somewhere awaiting him, here he stood and could get nowhere.

Then he remembered these words: "Cast thyself down; for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning thee lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." So he went to the edge and began to climb down, tho he knew there was little to take hold of. He lost his grasp and floated lightly down. He was not hurt—he was in the midst of the festive throng. He understood that he had made his speech and knew that he had spoken both of civic liberty and the liberty that is given by Jesus Christ—where and when, that he did not understand, but he knew that he had made that speech. His father and mother were there. His father seemed so pleased and proud and his mother was there, and this was Norway. He was so happy. He wanted to give the little boys money, for they were all so poor, most likely; but when he put his hand in his pocket it was empty. He then wanted to give something else. He remembered his pen knife with a mother of pearl handle. He put his hand in his pocket again, but found it full of earth. He hunted in the other pockets, they were also filled with earth. He was nearly crying, because he had nothing to give the urchins, who stood and waited for something and he again thrust his hand into the pockets but found only earth. "I have nothing here, my lad," he said to the nearest one, "but I have a fine knife with a mother of pearl handle that I'll give you and I have money and interesting books, and many, many things." Then he understood that the boy was not satisfied with this, so he took him and was going to lift him way up in the air and show him how strong

he was—but the boy was too heavy, he could not lift him. Then he knelt down, drew him close and kissed him—then he saw that it was Mosevig and that they were all alone, and he wept with a joy that he could not explain.

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Thus Pastor Welde fought with his dreams by night and his thoughts by day. This shabby, threadbare, raw-boned **parson** let him have no peace.

One evening at a meeting of the young people's society, someone had with a whisper and a sidelong glance told him that Pastor Mosevig's daughter was at the meeting. He had cast a curious glance in that direction and had seen a pale girl, with a hat that was quite out of style and with a thin boa across the narrow shoulders. So that was she? He stole a look at her every now and then—it really was she, then.

He could not take his eyes away from her. It was as if a claim or a bill was being presented—and he was trying to find out how large it was.

He would shake hands with her; show her that respect because she was Pastor Mosevig's daughter. On further consideration he understood that this might easily be misinterpreted. "Presume the old man, too, will be coming soon," someone beside him had whispered confidentially and triumphantly. This jarred on Mr. Welde's ears. It certainly was not strange that the girl went where so many young people came together. Perhaps there was a boy that she expected to meet here. He would not let on that he knew she was there.

But when the meeting had adjourned and he shook hands with some of the young people, down by the door, she suddenly appeared close by. He put out his hand and took a strangely warm and trembling little hand that made him quite embarrassed: "Miss Mose-

vig, if I'm not mistaken," he said. She blushed and drew her hand away. He was afraid that someone might have seen it and turned away and even shook hands with some that he had greeted before. It struck him as remarkable that no other hand was like hers. It must be a hallucination, he thought, because he had been thinking so often of her father.

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He looked for her at the next meeting, but she was not there. She was present at the following meeting, but left before it closed. He noticed that she had a brand-new coat. The room was warm, but she sat with it closely buttoned. Together with a couple of girl friends from Mosevig's church, she came and went almost unnoticed. They sat by themselves like some strange birds attracted by the bright light that emanated from the bright and happy crowd of young people in Welde's congregation.

Few, if any, spoke to them, and they disappeared as little noticed as they had come.

The winter passed and Welde began to take his regular walks as far as the mill-pond, when it was not too wet and muddy.

It was interesting to see the logs come floating and pile themselves together. The men stood with their long pike poles and with well directed thrusts led them into their different log-booms. Some were sent over the rapids; the others should wait their turn. Now and then the men drove their poles into a piece of wood and lifted it up on the log bridge. They kept that themselves. The logs came floating slowly but surely. The same fate awaited them all. They were to be made into buildings at last. And because some of the sunlight and heat from previous years was hoarded in them, nothing should be wasted; even the refuse should give warmth and light at the hearth of some home.

Was it not thus with people also? Was there not within them some latent, God-given good that could be used? Some logs sank; these were left lying along the banks to rot. It was somebody's fault surely—they had not been taken care of. They had grown in vain.

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Thus mused Pastor Welde, and the dark logs took on life and meaning. It was just at the turn of the road that he met her. He lifted his hat.

She stopped with a frightened look.

"Miss Mosevig, if I'm not mistaken. Did I scare you?"

"No, sir," she answered shortly and out of breath.

He told her that he used to take his afternoon walks in this direction. He was now on his way home. How beautiful it was up here. If he had not been a minister, he'd be a lumber-jack. Perhaps she didn't believe that.

She looked sidewise to where he was walking. He saw that she was red and embarrassed; but there was something like a skeptical smile on her lips. She walked on in silence and let him talk.

He saw that she had a shabby hat. The coat was the same one that he had seen her with at the society. She was angular like her father. Her complexion was not good. She looked cowed. There was nothing to her, but just because there was nothing worth noticing about her, he went to an extreme by conducting himself as if she possessed all the things she did not have. He was like a debtor who tries to make himself agreeable to a creditor whose claims he cannot pay.

She seemed quite timid and bashful. He remembered that he had heard her laugh. Why didn't she

laugh now? Could he get her to laugh? He glanced down at her just as she happened to look up at him. He knew he was blushing, for his ears and the back of his head felt warm. She certainly had a pair of eyes, when she opened them. She also had beautiful hair. It was heavy and lay like a cloud under her hat, reddish-brown and wavy. He became preoccupied and talked about the weather while he swung his cane and looked right ahead and tried to compare her with Maggie; but it seemed impossible to think of Maggie now. The humblest reality is enough to dispel the most beautiful dream. She walked in silence, with short, energetic steps.

Her answers were only Yes and No. It was impossible to carry on any conversation with her. About the church, the society, or her father, he dared not speak. The road wound around the river and bluffs—they had to be in company. There was no way out of it, and he felt a certain pleasure in walking and talking about this and that.

Now they were on the last hill-side from which the road passed on to town. A lumber wagon with a large load stood there, stuck fast in a mud hole. A boy stood and held the lines and whipped up the horses, while his father put his shoulder against the wheel and tried to get the wagon out. He took hold, the boy yelled at the horses and struck them with the whip, but the wagon stood as if rooted to the ground. They had evidently kept on a long time, for the farmer was sweaty and steam rose from the horses.

Mr. Welde and his companion stopped and took in the situation. Pastor Welde pulled off his gloves, his spring overcoat and his sack coat and looked about for a place to put them. "I can hold them for you," she said. Then he took off his cuffs and gave them to her, and also his cane, rolled up his shirt sleeves and

placed himself at the other side of the wagon. He took hold of the wagon box with one hand and the wheel with the other, placing himself close up to the muddy wagon to get a firm hold.

"Now let us try! All together—one, two, three—!"

Out came the wagon with a jerk so that the horses started on a run. The farmer had not let go quick enough; he fell flat in the mud. Only a hissing ejaculation escaped him, and that was: "The devil!"

When the pastor looked about for the girl, he saw her laughing, laughing hysterically, so that she was nearly choking. The minister, who was smeared with mud, had to laugh also. It looked as tho she could not stop. She laughed until her eyes were filled with tears. She looked as if she might sit right down in the road to have her laugh out.

Mr. Welde noticed how the laughter seemed to fill out the loose cloak, and the quivering young body seemed to threaten to burst the Kersey covering. "Did you hear what he said?" she gasped. "Did you hear it? Wasn't it awful? Wasn't it dreadful?"

The minister had with great deliberation begun to wipe off the mud with his handkerchief and to put on his cuffs and coat. Now he was pulling his gloves on over his soiled hands.

"But it's really dreadful that a minister and a minister's daughter should laugh because a man says something so shocking," he said with a smile. "Well, we found out that he was a Norwegian anyway, since he swore in that language."

"Yes, but he doesn't belong to papa's church."

"So — you will perhaps — well, I'll have him disciplined if he belongs to ours."

It seemed as if this accident had loosened her tongue. Welde was not so dreadfully swell after all. She felt as if she was on a more equal footing with him

now, when he was covered with mud. Welde was somewhat constrained under the feeling of being soiled. The soiled shirt sleeves and the muddy shoulder under the coat must have caused it.

They reached town at last and parted to go home.

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The next time the young people's society met she came and went unnoticed as she used to do. Mr. Welde had decided not to show her more attention than before, and greeted her in a distant but polite manner, as he did the others. Not with a look would he betray that she had often been in his thoughts. But when he had seen her thin figure squeeze thru the door, with the rest, he had a feeling of regret and had reproached himself because he had not spoken to her.

The next time she stayed away, and he was not sorry.

Later they had an ice-cream social in the society. Pastor Welde had made a speech and sat on the platform across from where the members of the society had seated themselves. He noticed that some of the most fashionable young ladies in the choir sat nearly bursting with suppressed laughter, that they whispered among themselves and cast stolen glances towards the audience and hid their faces in their song-books to conceal their laughter.

The pastor followed their glances and—he became burning hot. Over there, farther to the front than usual, sat Miss Mosevig with a most remarkable monster of a hat. Large hats were in style, but this one was the limit. He caught a word from Theodora Brooten. It was whispered quite audibly: "The Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City." They laughed again. Yes, they were laughing at the hat. It was really very queer and not unlike the famous taber-

nacle. On top of the girl's thin and angular figure it reminded one of a brimless Derby hat hung on an umbrella.

He looked in that direction again and met her eye. She sat there with an air almost defiantly proud and happy. The hat must have cost many dollars. It was evident that she thought she was as fine as any one.

He was suddenly seized with anxiety lest she should understand that they laughed at her and her expensive hat. The tittering girls at his right were still uneasy and became bolder by degrees. He looked at them with a clerical, reproachful look, befitting his orders, that usually proved effective, but now it was like putting oil on fire. It was impossible to be severe to all these pretty, smiling faces, an almost imperceptible smile must have hovered about his own mouth; for now they had still more difficulty in keeping themselves from laughing and whispering.

What if she should notice it? Women are sharp at discovering such things.

Yes—she had understood it. When he looked in that direction the big hat seemed to have sunk down between the rows of seats. She sat huddled together between her friends. Only the big, black crown of her hat was now visible. Her two friends bent down to her and whispered. Did they ask her what was the matter? Did she cry perhaps? A strong feeling of pity came over him. He was intently turning over the leaves in his pocket Bible that he held in his hand, but he was not reading.

When they began to serve lunch he walked up to Ellen Mosevig and shook hands with her and her friends—two servant girls that belonged to her father's congregation. He sat down and talked with them. They were both of them very talkative. Ellen

sat silent and dejected. One of her friends explained that she had an awful toothache. "I'd like to make you acquainted with some of the girls here," he said suddenly and went and got Miss Brooten and a couple of other girls along and introduced them to Miss Mosevig and her friends. He asked them to sit down and they all had ice-cream together. Miss Brooten and the others suddenly became very attentive toward the three girls, for now they had the pastor in their midst.

He stood by the door when she went. He again noticed that the clasp of her hand was different from that of all the others.

But she never came to the meetings any more.

CHAPTER XVI

In some mystical way this awkward girl that he scarcely knew had entered into the pastor's emotional life. He might take the trouble to reason this out and his common sense would tell him straight out that she was neither pretty nor intelligent. His common sense told him that the girl liked to deck herself out with cheap finery, that she really intended to make an impression by buying the biggest hat in Garrison's millinery establishment, without taking into consideration whether it was becoming or not. But her very awkwardness attracted him; her foolishness, her oddities, the new coat and even the hat attracted him. She had perhaps relied on these things to make her presentable to the well-dressed young people in town. She wished perhaps to represent Pastor Mosevig in a worthy manner—that it was for her father's sake she did it. That others made fun of her, attracted him. The firm, warm hand, calloused from work, attracted him.

But more than everything else, the feeling that she had some kind of a claim on him; that he owed her something, would draw him.

He was really afraid of her. Not that she would reproach him in any way, but her whole manner of being seemed to beg one not to take anything away from her, because she had so little.

It would be a great sin to take anything away from such, even if it were only a hope.

There was something that drew him in another way, too. It was her uncontrollable fit of laughter on the hillside. It was the first time in a long while that he had heard real laughter that had come from the heart.

She was a child of nature—she could both laugh and cry. This artlessness had warmed him. People took lessons to learn how to both laugh and cry—properly—nowadays. The newspapers gave directions to those who could not afford lessons. It was in human nature, like all other nature, the sharp transitions that attracted attention.

He thought of Maggie, who now presumably moved in the best circles in Paris and was made a great deal of on account of her beauty, intelligence, and talents. He felt an aching void within, he longed to put his arms about someone who needed protection and help. Something like hunger gnawed at his heart. It would be best to take into his arms someone who was scorned and persecuted, who thus would obtain redress from grievances.

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The object of all these speculations was at home alone and had a friend with her to keep her company. Pastor Mosevig and wife had gone to Minneapolis and had taken the two smallest children with them. Ellen Mosevig and her friend filled the small room with their laughter and chatter. They talked of course about fellows, sweethearts, and such things.

If Pastor Welde had seen her now as she stood by the sink, washing dishes, he might have found her quite attractive. Her friend stood and laughed and wiped dishes while Ellen washed and talked. Now and then she pushed the hair away from her forehead with her thumb or fastened a hairpin. There was always something the matter with her hair. Her mouth laughed and her eyes laughed. The laughter lay awaiting behind every sentence and trembled in the rich, deep, throbbing turns of the voice. The words seemed to chase each other up from a breast where the heart carried on as it pleased.

She was telling about her meeting with Pastor Welde.

"But what did you say then?"

"I didn't say anything. What could I say, anyway? I only walked along and thought of all that papa had told and about all I've learned in Sunday School, how really good girls must behave, so as to come to God in Heaven."

"Oh, my, you're awful, Ellen; but didn't you say anything at all?"

"No, it was he who said it all."

"But what did he say then?"

"Goodness, he talked about everything; about those who were on the drive and about motorcycles and chimney-sweeps and concerts and Roosevelt and the heathens in Alabama or wherever it was."

"Well, what did you do?"

"I walked along like a fool, of course, and thought about what papa always says, that if I keep my mouth shut, no one will know how stupid I am."

"But didn't he ask you about anything?"

"Yes, he asked me if I was fond of music, and I answered Yes, and then he asked what kind of music I liked, and I said Yes to that also, I believe. I was so full of laughter."

"Of laughter—are you crazy?"

"Yes, he was so swell, you see. He had gloves, cane, cuffs, all so fine, so fine, a real dude so precise and thoughtful, so careful not to get near me. When I slipped and came near falling, he put out his hand like Moses in our altar painting; but he did not come near me. He took care to leave so much space between us *that—*."

"—So that old fellow of yours, Jack, could have gotten in between you," interrupted her friend.

"Oh, he," laughed Ellen—"He might have driven

between us with his bakery wagon; well, he takes a little more room now after he got to be a clerk in the bakery, you know."

They both laughed.

"But now comes the funny part. Just as I walked along, wishing myself far away at the new missionary station in Madagascar, because I was trying hard to keep from laughing, we came to a farmer wagon stuck in the mud. Thank God, I thought, now we'll get something to talk about that I can understand, and I was going to say something about the poor horses—now, do you know what he did?"

Miss Mosevig struck an attitude: "Would you be so kind, Miss Mosevig, as to hold this for me?" She took the comb carefully out of her hair and placed it on the arm of her friend—"and this, if I may ask?" She pulled off an imaginary pair of gloves, while she put the dish rag under her arm as a cane—"and this?" She handed her the dish rag with a sober mien—"and this?" She made some motions as if she pulled a coat off and handed it to her—"and this, if it is not too much for you, Miss Mosevig?" She pretended to take off a pair of cuffs with great care from her bare arms and loaded all this on her friend, who stood with her mouth open, intensely expectant.

"What then?" she asked, "What did he do? Hurry up and tell me!"

Ellen put her shoulders back and marched with long, dignified steps over to the kitchen stove. She turned her gaze upward and pulled at a pair of imaginary shirtsleeves.

"Then he bent down and took hold of that awfully muddy wheel this way, and put his shoulder so, 'one, two, three,' he said, 'all together.' 'Hey, there!' said the farmer, and he was going to push, too, but he fell his full length, for the wagon came out at

once when the minister took hold. 'The devil,' he said—the farmer, you understand—he got both hands in the mud. I stood so sober; but when I saw what the minister looked like—the whole shirt-front and the white vest and the fine shirtsleeves—then I laughed till I thought I should die laughing—I was hardly able to stop."

At the recollection of this Ellen gave a fair representation of how she had laughed, and her friend with her.

"But didn't he understand that you laughed at him then?"

"No, I blamed it to the farmer and what he said, and then he laughed also."

"Oh, my, how funny you are, Ellen."

"A sick cat would have had to laugh at it."

"Have you seen him since?"

"Not since that time in the young people's society. To tell the truth, I've scolded myself ever since. It was horrid to sit and laugh and bite my handkerchief at such a meeting; but the girls in the choir laughed also. It just came over me that way."

"Oh, my, but I was ashamed when the minister came over and talked to us. I thought, at first, he would ask what we laughed at."

"Did you notice how sad he looked when he talked to us? I'm sure he prayed for us because we were so wicked."

"You mean ill-bred, don't you?"

"Yes, that also—well, it was horrid, but I don't care. We belong to another church, anyway. If we are to weep, we must do it in our own church—isn't that so?"

"Why, you are perfectly awful, Ellen — I am shocked."

Her friend viewed her with pride and pretended motherliness.

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Mr. Welde was about to try something that he had thought of for a long time. He had procured some pastel colors and would try to paint something, far up along the river. He wanted to be alone and went farther than usual. Miss Jorgina had looked very suspiciously at him when he went off with the flat, mysterious-looking package.

At a place farther up, the river widened and there were steep sand stone rocks. That would be something worth trying his hand on. He seated himself on a half-decayed log, opened his packages and got ready.

This would have been a fine landscape if it had not been for all the marks left by the axes of the loggers. On these hillsides and in these ravines, the pines had ruled supreme. Now there were only slender foliferous trees in the place of the tall, straight pines. It was fine if one only looked at it casually, but on closer inspection it reminded one of a battle-field. How could he get this painted? Worst of all were the old, dry roots of trees that were left and lay there sprawling, after the soil had been washed away. There, in the fissure of a rock, stood one. The tree had been cut down and the stump hung black and rotten over the water and exhibited its old death-wound. The black, dry root lay there yet fumbling and sprawling, trying to hold fast a while yet. Not to gather food for anything or to keep anything up—only a weak death grip to make a show of its mutilation. Like giant spiders they lay and clung to the stones and crevices. The hard, withered roots still tried to hold the stump up to the light. Ugly were they. There is always something dismal about bared roots. By the edge

of the water others lay sprawling as if in a death-cramp, with bent, twisted, and palsied fingers. Some lay under the water and stretched out their black, tough claws towards the boats that passed by. A wilderness of hatred and despair were these roots, that once held communion with the birds of the air and the worms in the bowels of the earth. The ax had done its work.

They contained latent sunlight and heat, these ugly roots. They might have given warmth and heat to some hearth in the cold winter nights; but none had use for this warmth and light. It took too much exertion to get anything out of these tough and crooked roots, so they lay there and became hardened and evil-looking.

A battlefield where even the corpses were demonstrating.

Mr. Welde sat there daubing with his colors. He was no master, and the roots of the trees became hard, brownish-black fingers that grimly scratched the rocks and the river bank. Young, leafy trees rose among them. No more should the pines rule over them. The slender trunks were full of curiosity as they stretched themselves up among the stumps.

Mr. Welde put his things together. It was not so easy as he had thought. It was fortunate that he had been able to dabble with this unseen by any man.

He sat looking at what he had put together. It was only a daub. He remembered that Maggie had told him that unsuccessful marine painters used to make "burning ships" when they had spoiled a canvas. In this "fire" all the technical errors were drowned and the imagination given full play. Could he find something wherewith to redeem his daub? He looked

about and there, in the path right behind him, stood—Ellen Mosevig.

He was really frightened as if he had been caught doing something wrong. He arose embarrassed and greeted her.

“Is it you? Are you roaming about all alone?”

“May I see it?” she asked, as he was about to put away his unsuccessful sketch. He showed it to her with some hesitation.

“Isn’t it fine? Oh, but isn’t it lovely? Can you really draw like that?”

“Do you really think it is nice?” said the minister. “There are some small faults about it,” he laughed. “Here is the river; it is a little askew. It stands a little on end and slants upward. Then there are the trees, for all these green patches are supposed to be trees. To make leaves is an extra trick that we did not learn in our theological class; but if I label it, ‘Made by a minister,’ people will not be so low as to criticise such things. This is the fore-ground, which is blank; it bears witness to the artist’s modesty that he had not gotten so far that he could get it all in.”

He laughed at his fancies, but she stared both at him and at the picture with the frankest admiration. “Can you paint yourself also as sitting on that log?” she asked.

“I—no—that wouldn’t do; but seat yourself there, and I’ll try to get you in the picture.”

“I—what if someone should see it?”

“Well, then they would buy it from me at once. Sit down and sit erect as a Lutheran minister’s daughter ought to sit. Afterwards you may tell me how you happened to come here and run across a decent and perfectly harmless man.”

She had seated herself and sat like one posing for a photograph. "Now, please look thoughtful."

"But I'm not thoughtful. Papa says I'm always thoughtless."

"All right. Look thoughtless then. It's all the same provided you look natural."

He scratched a female figure first, and then the log she sat on. Yes, it actually became a picture. The gray skirt and the white shirtwaist—the great wealth of hair under the big, flat "merry widow" hat. This was a burning ship, all right. Maggie! Maggie! Oh, if you could see me now! Pastor Welde was in excellent humor. True, the log sagged conspicuously where the young girl sat, but that was a mere trifle. Now she sat there, while the black roots crawled and sprawled all around her.

Ellen Mosevig put her finger on the figure and said: "So that's me."

"Yes, now I have you, Miss Mosevig."

She burst out laughing, and he laughed, too. He realized that he had said something that he should not have said. He had had long experience and was really an expert in conversation with young ladies without saying anything that could be construed as a flirtation. This one did not belong to the congregation, however, so he felt he could be more free with her. But all thoughts of church affairs were far away from him just then.

She gave him an arch look from the side, as if she wanted to have some fun with him. He had seated himself on the log and had commenced to put his things together again. His face had become sober. She sighed—drew a long breath. He looked up.

"I suppose you intend to have me lying in that box," she said.

"Was that why you sighed so deeply?"

"Yes, that was it."

"So you don't like that?"

"No—I know, of course, that we shall all have to go down into a box at last, but—."

"You don't like to think of that," interrupted the minister; "well, I don't like it myself, either," he said frankly, by way of consolation.

Ellen sat poking her parasol into the sand. She had come because she was to meet Jack at this place. This she had, of course, to keep to herself. When the minister began to talk about the box into which we shall have to go at last and that we ought to think about it, she bent her head in preparation for a sermon—one that she had deserved. She had heard so many when she had blurted out something frivolous. She must sit quite devout—and at the same time have an eye on the path at the left, where she expected Jack to come.

Welde was thru and sat with one knee placed against his folded hands. Ellen felt that he was watching her—and that was true. He looked at her shabby clothes, the worn blouse that in places only seemed to be held together by the starch. He noticed the threadbare gloves and it touched him to see the brass pin on her breast. Her people must be very poor. She sat there quite embarrassed, tho she was in reality of a gay and cheerful nature—even a little roguish, but free and natural.

"I think I must go now," said Ellen suddenly and got up.

"Are you so busy? Well, you likely have some errand—and I have got you safe in my box now—and can take you home with me," he added. He did not want her to leave him so dejected.

She seated herself again, this time a little closer to him, and looked searchingly at him. She was seized

with a sense of regret at her poor manners in the young people's society. She ought to make some excuse.

"I hope you're not angry with me for—well, you know at the social of the young people's society. I was really so ashamed."—She bent her head, but braced up again and said with spirit: "But then I've kept away ever since."

Welde was quite moved. The poor girl evidently took all the blame on herself.

"It really made me angry," he said, and the anger still trembled in his voice; "but I could not make a scene and reprove there. In your place I would have done the same. One often finds least of good manners where one should expect most."

Ellen had turned towards him with indignation, and her cheeks glowed; but the minister did not notice it. He sat and looked straight ahead, absorbed in his own indignation. The girl struggled to repress her tears. What right had he to speak that way to her? Was that nice? She rose quickly and went off without saying goodbye, towards the path to the left.

Let her go, poor girl, thought the minister. She would not let anyone see her tears. He felt a strong indignation against Theodora Brooten, who without doubt had started this mirth over Miss Mosevig's hat. He would sit a while yet. He did so, and then it struck him that it would only be mortifying for Ellen to touch this subject again. He got up and walked slowly up the path, till he got on the road leading home. When he had walked about a quarter of an hour he got to thinking that it was not very chivalrous of him to leave the young lady alone by the riverside in her distress. So he turned his steps back to the same place again.

From the road he could look way down to the river bank and the old log.

Ellen was sitting there now, but at her side, with his arm about her waist, sat a young man.

He turned and walked slowly homeward.

He felt as if everything had suddenly become waste and empty both within him and without him. His steps were noisy, it seemed to him. He saw people here and there; but only as things that were set in motion by mechanical power. He also walked along—only because he could not stand still—no more so than any of the other movable figures that he saw.

CHAPTER XVII

Mrs. Andrew Thompson knew very well who Ellen was and what kind of a fellow she kept company with. It could not be avoided that the conversation now and then drifted into the territory of the other congregation, and there was little to talk about except the minister and his family. Mrs. Thompson sniffed around this theme about the daughter like a well trained hunting dog nosing for a scent. She understood that the minister was interested, but here she lost the scent and had to begin anew, but did not get any farther.

Mosevig, poor man, had much anxiety concerning this daughter, for she was so—well, rather wild. She evidently took after her father, who in his youth had not been of a very serious mind, either. And then this fellow of hers; he was a man who had no steadiness in his make-up. She knew him from the time he was driving the bread wagon. Later he became a clerk. And one couldn't know just what the trouble was, but he was discharged. He was alone in the store so much, and young people need money. The old baker, Mr. Simpson, certainly had his reasons. Now the boy was running up and down the river with a fishpole and let his mother support him and herself at the wash-tub. Well, that might pass, if there had not been anything worse about him. There was a girl in the choir in Mosevig's church who quit because of him. She couldn't say what it was, but the girl had said that she would not sing in the choir while that pig was there. She called him pig, that she did, and she was such an upright and reliable girl. He also drank and went to all the dances in town, so he was not very good company for a wild girl like Ellen Mosevig.

Pastor Mosevig had been very strict with her, and such things may go too far. She had not had very much fun in her life. If she was to get clothes, she had to earn them herself by sewing—she was really smart at that. She had even made Mrs. Thompson's brown cashmere dress. Her father would scarcely stand that she was neatly dressed. Once he put a new hat she had bought on the chopping block.

Mr. Welde had to laugh. He remembered the "tabernacle," and Mrs. Thompson lost the scent again. He pitied the young girl. He had said to Mrs. Thompson that if the girl loved this fellow, she might perhaps make a man of him. Mrs. Thompson laughed at this. The idea! No, she didn't think any girl could make a man of anyone after they were married if she couldn't make it before they were married. But she knew this much, that he was not proper company for Ellen Mosevig—and now she had also begun to run to dances; well, the father knew nothing about that, of course.

The minister had looked thoughtful, and Mrs. Thompson seemed to scent an invisible track.

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He had several times taken his sketch out to destroy it; but it was his first attempt—and in a way his own child. The placing of that female figure there, helped wonderfully. He would get oil colors and try them to see if he could get anything out of it for his own pleasure at any rate. It was no poor idea this—"burning ships" on unsuccessful marine paintings. It brought the imagination into play and made the beholder overlook the technical faults. It was the same with this figure of a woman on his picture. Let the river be impossible and the trees impossible and the atmosphere impossible—when one painted a figure like

this, one knew what was up and what was down on the "painting," and one might imagine that she sat there waiting for her beloved Olson or Nelson and that the river and the trees looked that way to her, as the artist had made them.

So he put the sketch away in great good humor. Afterwards he would imagine that it was not so bad, and whimsical thoughts would rise:—was she sitting on the log yet?—or possibly there were two sitting there. Then he had to look at his "work of art" again, only to put it away with a shake of his head.

Still, after all, this might only be evasions, and it was Ellen that he hid and could not bear to surrender to the flames in Jorgina's kitchen stove.

If there were so many that had conspired against her and predicted misfortune, he would take care of the little he had of her.

He had met her once since that time, in company with a girl friend. They laughed and nudged each other with their shoulders when he first saw them. When they saw him, they straightened up, became stiff and dignified and returned his greeting in a formal and distant manner. It really pained him that they became so serious for his sake. He was almost sorry that he was a minister; otherwise he could have gone after them, and treated them to ice-cream and had his share of the fun. Why should a minister's position always bring this with it that merry, laughing people became solemn and the laughter died when he came? It must have been years since he had had a really hearty laugh and—oh, yes, there, on the hill-side when the farmer swore. He certainly should not have laughed then, but that's the way it goes. One must rather go as a messenger of death here on earth and witness how the laughter freezes wherever a person wends his way.

He felt the sting, for he dearly loved to hear people laugh.

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This Dr. Spohr was a queer gink. Welde had met him the other day.—He was shoving an old baby-carriage along the sidewalk and swore like a trooper when the minister laughingly asked him if he had commenced to sell vegetables. Some potatoes and a bag of apples lay in it. The doctor's fat face was red from exertion and anger and he had told the pastor to take care of his sheep and leave gentlemen alone.

Welde had later found out the real facts. The doctor had ordered that a sick child should be taken out every day. The mother, who was very poor, had said that she had no baby-carriage and could not afford to buy one either. Then the doctor had seen this one in a second-hand store and had bought it for a couple of dollars. As he, pleased with this unexpected bargain, came past the fruit dealer, he remembered that the widow had several children, so he bought a peck of apples. He grew still more good-humored and thought of the mother herself, so he got a couple of pecks of potatoes. Just then it dawned on him that people laughed at him. Then he himself also realized that it looked rather queer for a man wearing a light gray suit, a fancy vest, and a Panama hat to be pushing an old baby-buggy with potatoes in it along the main street, and so he began to swear. He had cursed the buggy and the potatoes and the people—including the minister—when he met him, and it appeared to give him relief. It had not helped any that the minister went along with him. Of course they met Dr. Ebbesen, and the Brootens had to come whizzing by in their damned honking machine. When he got to the house he bethought himself that for a dime he could have hired a boy to bring the buggy there. Then

he flew into a fit of anger, and was so enraged that the woman's blessings were entirely lost on him.

Welde had to smile. This Dr. Spohr was certainly a queer guy. The days went by. Welde was, as a rule, very busily occupied with his work. He seemed to reach everywhere, always willing and punctual. His evenings were usually taken up. If he had an evening free, he generally visited the doctor to play a game of whist or to quarrel with him. It was usually the one or the other. They studied how to disagree, it seemed. They watched each other closely, and each gave the other good advice, which neither of them cared to follow.

But this came to an end also. When he now had an evening free, he walked to and fro on the streets, and then it often happened that he met a girl with an angular figure and a drooping head. She seemed so small and insignificant by the side of him. Those who did not know them would turn halfway around and think: this is an odd couple.

He had met her in the middle of the summer up by the river. She had sat there on the old log huddled together, and when he had spoken and she had lifted her head, he had seen that she had wept. To be sure, she had tried to look brave, but Welde understood that she felt bad. It was presumably because this Nelson had left her. He had heard that he had gone to the coast.

She was to be pitied, and he felt sorry for her. If she had been strikingly beautiful and robust and fashionably dressed, he would have left her alone with her grief; but this—her state of collapse touched him. Besides, she was a minister's daughter and he had, it seemed to him, an added obligation to be friendly towards her.

They had talked together, and as if half dreaming

she had asked Welde if it was true that those who drown live their whole lives over again before they die.

To this he could not give any answer; but he understood that it was not safe for her to sit by the river, so he offered to accompany her back to town.

Since then he had met her several times. She must be kept away from the river. Scamps like this Nelson boy ought to be locked up.

He thought also of Pastor Mosevig. A shudder passed thru him at the thought that something might happen to his daughter. One reads of such things in the newspapers. If he could—yes, he was happy at the thought—if he could look after the daughter a little—then she would get over this so that she would perhaps put the river out of her thoughts.

And he sought the girl. He walked with her thru town, wearing his tall hat. It seemed to him that she walked more erect. Now and then a ray of the old gaiety beamed thru her, and then he was happy. She was perhaps over the worst of it.

But this would not do for any length of time. It caused talk. The girl had perhaps heard something. At any rate, these walks stopped as if by mutual agreement, and Mr. Welde was glad of it. It seemed that he had succeeded in making a small payment on a great claim against him.

CHAPTER XVIII

Pastor Mosevig was full of many heavy thoughts. He would have given up his charge long ago; but the church he was affiliated with was strong, and the missionary board promised increased aid. It was just in such a place that one must retain the hold. When God's appointed time came, there might be a change. The dead orthodoxy and the Christianity that is merely a name had to reach a certain climax before it burst, so that people could see its hollowness.

As a faithful servant of the Lord he had been grieved to see the congregation across the river grow so rapidly. He had never had any doubts either of his ability or as to his calling. It was the other minister's fine appearance and the modern church that drew. Such an unmarried ladies' man could of course gather the young ladies, and then the young men followed. The business men went where they found most people and had the best prospects for gaining customers. The small ones wanted to be where the big ones were. It had always been that way.

His daughter had been spying on them at the meetings of the young people's society, and that had confirmed his suspicion. It was Welde the girls were after. That Brooten's Theodora was in love with the minister—that he could have guessed even without having his daughter's word for it.

He muttered many things thru his sparse beard. God would at last prick this brilliant soap-bubble, and people would see who had the Spirit. He felt defiant. He would show that he could hold out and bide the Lord's hour, when the whited sepulchres should

be opened and their dead bones and uncleanness should be disclosed.

But now something new had turned up that had bent him down as nothing in his whole life had ever done.

He had heard that Pastor Welde had done something by no means proper. The card-playing at Dr. Spohr's had leaked out—people had it from his own lips that they engaged in such indecent indulgence. It served as a new proof of corruption that the congregation would allow such things. That he went along to silly coffee-parties at the homes of such as Ole Narvesen, that all knew had been an inveterate drunkard, was not very becoming for a minister either. There were certainly not very many gathering about the Word of God in that congregation. Now he had also heard that he kept company with a girl of rather questionable reputation. It had come to him directly from one of Brooten's American business friends, so there was no doubt something in it, and he had not found it necessary to keep silent about it. He had heard this rumor with secret satisfaction, for he knew that the Lord would in some way prick a hole in the bubble. He had made an effort to get at the truth and had found that the girl of a questionable reputation was, in fact, his own daughter. It was Mrs. Thompson herself who had told him.

The strong and defiant man had wept. Ellen was his child of sorrow. She had been thoughtless and wild from the time she was small. He had punished her and had not spared the rod, he had prayed for her; she gave up quickly and begged to be forgiven, but had her own way after all. Then there was this Nelson boy that she kept company with. She had sneaked away to dances with him.

Still he loved her; it was Ellen first and Ellen last.

He had been glad when this Nelson boy at last betook himself away from town. He understood that she mourned—that is the way with young people. It had grieved him to see her so changed. Her fresh and merry laughter was no longer heard in the home. She took care of the younger children, helped her mother and went quietly about like an elderly person. He often found her sitting near the bottom of the dark stairway, with her feet drawn up and her head resting in her arms. She had never sat that way before. His heart bled for her; if she only would confide in him, but she never came to him with anything. He pondered on this, and being used to connecting his colleague with all his misfortunes, he soon came to the conclusion that Welde was the cause of this. She had met him and had gotten foolish notions into her head. This Nelson boy had understood it, and the engagement was broken. That was Welde's object; then he had flirted a little with her in return.

Poor, poor Ellen! He would talk to her gently and lovingly—she needed a father now, and her father would manage it.

So one day he undertook to speak to her. He asked her if she really went out walking with Welde, and to this she answered curtly, "Yes." As he had thought beforehand, he should now have put his arms about her and called her by tender, pet names and made her realize how hopeless this was. Her short and quite natural answer made him give up the idea of embracing her. He was not used to doing anything like this either. It destroyed the proper respect, and he held strictly to his dignity as the master and head of the family. He began to explain to her how hopeless it was to put any faith in such flirtation on Welde's part. She must know that he did not think seriously of marrying her. She sat still and listened and only said

that she knew that so well that no one needed to tell her.

“Why did you go with him then?”

“Because—because I didn’t know why I shouldn’t do it.”

“So you really intend to keep on running about this way, Ellen?”

“Yes, if he wants to.”

Mosevig felt the ground give way under him. Should she also be taken away from him?

It was not until he began to reason with her, told her how it might also cause Mr. Welde annoyance—gossip and all that—that she grew serious and began to cry. Mosevig sat quite confused and was about to take her in his arms but checked himself this time also.

That evening Ellen sat a long time in the stairs, and many thoughts crossed each other in the little head. She had not thought about what these walks might cost Mr. Welde. She had felt herself drawn to him—she had clung to him in a way, after this with Nelson had happened, and of the consequences of which she dreaded to think. She had only made fun of Welde, but when this dreadful thing had happened, she had clung to this certainty that if father and mother and all would cast her off he would not do so. He was so big and fine and was so learned and he would help and in some inexplicable way see to it that everything would be all right again. No one could point a finger at her even if she was poorly dressed—and not worthy to tie his shoestring, when she walked by his side down Grand Avenue and thru the park.

But he did not know about her real trouble. She had not told him, and could not do it either.

All this doubt had been submerged in the thought that he need not know it, that he would—well, she did

not know what he'd do; she only felt so absolutely safe when she was with him.

She had not comprehended that his reputation ever could become sullied. It had not entered her mind.

Now she sat there alone—just as she was. She might have known it could not go on that way.

When she realized that he also was only a human being, the straw failed her, or rather—the rock that she had clung to. Her little head was buried in her arms. She was only a small, miserable human bundle in a stairway, that any one might kick away—or break its neck.

No one could help her now.

But he had painted her on a large piece of cardboard, and this he had in his own home. Perhaps there was help yet. No one could touch him. He was too big for them.

And no one should touch him either. She got up and tossed her head as she used to do. If it was necessary, then—and the pond rose before her. It did not seem so dreadful now. She shook herself bravely like a little dog that has been in the water and has come out of it, washed nice and clean.

Pastor Mosevig thought there was a change in his daughter and that she was more like herself. He even had to communicate this to his wife, tho he usually cared little about imparting his thoughts to her, as it would tend to diminish the distance between them if he spoke more to her than strictly necessary. His wife looked up from her work tired and a little surprised, and at first did not know how she was to regard this confidence. At last she said that this was really true, and sent her husband a grateful look. She had also had her thoughts about Ellen and had prayed to God for her; but she had not wanted to say anything to her husband about it.

Now he had broached the subject himself. For a moment she was about to ask his opinion about the suspicion she had; but—perhaps it was not well to do so now. She would wait, then God would open a door. With a sigh she again took up her work.

She had a long time thought of talking seriously to Ellen; but she had a feeling that it was not for her to talk about anything so serious without her husband's knowledge. The Lord would surely open a door when His hour came.

CHAPTER XIX

It was Jorgina who suggested it. She had asked why Welde didn't take fishing tackle along when he went to the river. It happened that people caught fine bass and wall-eyed pike there. To prepare fish was her specialty. Pastor Welde found the advice very good, and when he now went up towards the river—and it happened quite often—he had a modern, very neat casting rod with agate guides and an expensive reel. He had such practice now that he could throw his bait nearly across the river. He was very proud when, after a few failures, he could bring a fine black bass weighing three pounds to the kitchen for Jorgina. It was the best recreation he had yet thought of.

There was exercise for the body and rest for the mind—and, now and then, great joy in the kitchen.

Jorgina was happy because the minister was happy. Pastor Wangel of the Synod and Pastor Nelson of the United Church had both been expert fishermen and fond of fish. She was getting him well trained now, and more and more the way he ought to be.

In the study there was a whole pile of sofa pillows. Every little while some young lady in the church sent the minister one—and sometimes there were several that had clubbed together and had presented a great, big one. Jorgina tossed these pillows about with a vexed mind when she was cleaning. They reminded her of silly girls, the one sillier than the other. She had suggested that some might be carried up stairs, but the minister was very considerate; if any of the donors came they should see that he made use of their gifts. So now there were pillows everywhere. He could not sit down without moving some of them. They stood

in rows on sofas and chairs. She took them out and beat them to her heart's content at least once a week, but sighed as she carried them in again and placed them where they showed to the least advantage. They spoiled things both for her and for the minister, so she looked almost triumphantly at the pillows when the minister left with the fishing rod.

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The trees by the river bank had already begun to take on a touch of autumn and to dress themselves in variegated colors. It was just the right kind of a day for fishing. It had rained a little in the morning, and he had been out early. He had had good practice now in throwing the line and could easily escape the straying logs that did not follow the current along the opposite shore. From a small point that jutted into the river, he had an excellent base for operations. In the middle of the river lay a sand bank, and it was close to this that he had his best success. It was not easy to reel in the bait along the side of it, but practice leads to perfection. An ugly old root also lay there, and he had to do his best to escape it.

He was in excellent humor. He was free and could do as he pleased. Here he, like any other youth in town, could hum the tune to the popular ballad about Redwing, the beautiful Indian maiden, who wept her heart away:

*There once lived an Indian maid,
A shy little prairie maid—*

It was just fit to hum when one straightened out a back-slash on the line. It went more slowly when he came to the sad refrain:

*Now the moon shines tonight on pretty Redwing,
The breeze is sighing, the nightbird's crying,*

*For far 'neath his star her brave is sleeping—
While Redwing's weeping — — —*

He took his position—"her heart away;" and with a whistling sound the big, glittering water jack sailed away describing a semi-circle and landed on the other side of the root.

"Now, you'll see," he thought. He would try to be very careful; there were two other baits at seventy-five cents a piece, and a spoonhook in that pesky root already. If he could only get the line past so as not to get stuck. He raised his rod to let the line drift a little. The sun got in his eyes so he could not see very well. Then he began to reel in—well, it was just as he had expected. It had caught. He tried to pull very carefully; but it was no use. The new heavy line, spun of silk fibre, was almost unbreakable. He struggled a long while, but that bait was anchored firmly. Worn out and covered with perspiration, he stopped and turned his face away from the scene.

Just then he saw something white moving among the trees farther up along the river. He stepped upon a little hillock to see better. Now he saw that it was a lady. She was taking her hat off. It was up by that old log. Did she intend to bathe? That would be a fine situation—. There,—good God—didn't she jump right into the river! It was she. He quickly threw his rod into the brush while his eye searchingly spied for something to put out and catch with. He knew the river was deep and he could not swim. There—right in the sandstone bluff stood a dry tree with a long trunk, split in two. As quick as thought, he caught at the thinnest part and hung on, but it did not break off. Then he caught around the trunk and set his foot against the rocks and bent against them until for a moment everything turned black before his eyes. A large piece of rock fell out, and he fell with the tree

on top of him. He was quickly on his feet again, and with almost superhuman strength he half pulled and half carried the tree some steps and threw it out. He went along with it and, standing in the water up to his waist he pushed it into the river. He had heard a half smothered cry from her. Now he knew the current would carry the tree along as swiftly as it would carry her. It would be of no use. "O Lord! Help!"—But the tree lay there and did not drift away. Now he saw something white among the branches. "Almighty God! Help!" He took some steps out and pushed himself forward and got hold of the tree trunk and lay across it and worked his way farther on. He knew now that he was at the deepest point but felt no fear on his own account. In a moment he caught an arm and lifted. The tree trunk sank under, but he had a firm hold. He knew that he was under the water and still held on. Now he understood that he must die, but he did not let go. Then all at once he felt the bottom with his feet and stood up. He was in water up to his arms but was close to the shore.

The fishline—for it was that which had held the tree—had given way under the double weight and the tree had swung ashore with them. It seemed like a miracle, but Welde did not have time to think of that now. He carried the half unconscious body away from the shore, loosened her clothes and was going to work over her as he had been taught to do with people who were near drowning.

She came to, however, without that. Her lips moved, "Let me go!" she hissed. "Let me go!" and she tried to get up; but fell in a heap and cried and coughed and remained lying with her hands before her face.

The minister felt a great joy within his breast. It was the first time that he had saved a human life. But the next moment he remembered how near death he

had been himself. A still greater joy filled him. The Lord helps! A stronger power than his own had helped here. It was a miracle indeed.

He wanted to say this to the girl; he wanted to say that they ought to thank God—no, he would comfort her or say something to her: “Miss Mosevig,” he said, but his voice sounded as if choked by tears, he thought. He wanted to speak, but his throat was filled as when someone is going to cry. He checked his tears, he swallowed hard as he, the big, strong man stood over the little bundle of a woman who lay there hiccoughing, all huddled together. With difficulty he could say a few words:

“Don’t—don’t cry,” he said.

And then he left her and sank on his knees behind a big stone. He wanted to thank God, but he felt that his whole body shook and he could not find words. He felt as if he was about to cry, but could not do that either. After a little he began to breathe more easily. The Lord had certainly held His hand over them both.

He was more composed when he rose. The girl lay quietly on the grass, but he could see that her bosom was working violently. It was best to let her have her fight out. He began to think about himself. He pulled his shoes and stockings off and wrung the water out of them. Fortunately he had been in his shirt sleeves, so his coat was dry. He had knocked off his hat when he broke the tree down, so that also was safe. One had to take an inventory, as it were, after such a catastrophe. He began to get his thoughts in order now.

He saw that Ellen had begun to arrange her clothing. She loosened her hair and tried to smooth it out. Thank God, the worst was over with now. It is a

pretty good sign when they commence to fuss with their hair, he reflected.

One thought passed thru his mind: that her father must be spared from knowing this.

"Well, well—we've got into a mess, haven't we?" He said half jokingly, "What do you think your father will say?"

She gave him no answer.

"Perhaps it's best that we stay here a while, until we dry a little, before we go back," he tried again.

Still no answer.

So he went and sat down beside her.

He took plenty of time before he spoke again.

"Now, tell me, Miss Mosevig, how could you think of doing anything so dreadful as this?" He paused a little and continued: "When one is in great trouble, one can always get help. There are two to whom you can go—and it seems as if you listened to the one you ought not to have listened to—he gives poor help—when he leads us into the river when we are in trouble. Was there no one who could advise you?" he added with warmth.

Ellen's fingers let go of her hair and she sat moaning all in a heap.

"No, no," said the minister. "Dear me, don't cry so!" "It's all right now." He spoke to her as to a child who is disconsolate and whose tears he must try to stop. There was a long pause, only broken now and then by the girl's quiet moaning.

"I presume I am a hero now! You have made a hero of me. Do I look it?" he said with an assumed air of self-importance as he sat and gazed straight ahead. That he spoke English to her was unusual, and the sobbing ceased. He felt that she looked at him thru her hands, which she still held before her face.

"Well, we'll watch it when we get home. I'm going to stay here—I don't dare to go home. What do you think Jorgina will say? I don't dare to go home at all;" he sat as if absorbed in his own contemplations.

Ellen looked at him. He looked like a big, mischievous boy—a brother, playmate, or something like that. He still sat and looked straight ahead.

What had happened? Something had left her as if by magic. A feeling of shame remained: How she did look. She began to arrange her hair again and thought with satisfaction that she had put her hat and long coat on the log so they were dry.

"How goes it with mylady? That's good—you're all right now. No, no, I don't need any explanation; but"—

She did not let him finish. "I'm so ashamed, Mr. Welde, that I can't begin to tell you how ashamed I am. Since Jack left,—then this came over me. I'm not this way always. I usually think that my condition is no worse than that of a hundred thousand other girls—and I've been quite brave too."

"Has someone ill-treated you, since you could think of something so dread—something so desperate, I mean?" Welde said this with an effort.

"No, it was because someone wanted to be good to me," she said quietly, and then she suddenly burst into a violent fit of weeping. "I don't know what it was," she sobbed.

Pastor Welde went over to her and wanted to put his hand on her shoulder and talk to her. She seemed to guess it.

"Don't you touch me," she cried and cast a wild look towards the river. Then she sank down again, and Welde let her weep away.

Her father, Pastor Mosevig, must not learn about this. He must not be told anything about it. It was

too bad for the poor man—. If this also should be known, then—. Welde sat still and looked out over the water. The sun was warm and the clothes steamed from the heat.

"Oh, well, I don't care," he heard behind him.

"What's up now?" he asked in the most careless tone he could assume.

"Nothing, I'm all right now."

He turned, and there she stood, disheveled but tolerably respectable.

"There, now you're brave," he said.

"Yes, I've tried to be—yes, I've been quite brave."

"You surely have. But you must never do anything like that again. You must pray God to keep you from such thoughts,—I don't understand how you, who are so brave and sensible, could think of such a thing."

"Guess I was crazy—but you don't know what us girls have to put up with at times. Father, he said—well, it doesn't matter what he said; but I'm not what he thinks I am. He doesn't know—there's no one that knows what we girls may do when it comes to the point. The men think they can do both this and that—and when they have trampled on—someone, then all will trample—even one's own father. I want to say I can't stand everything either. I'm not that way. I can't do that—and now since Jack left, then—but I'm a woman anyway—I'm certainly a woman anyway. They can't do with me as they please."

A gleam of pride and defiance shone in her dark eyes.

Pastor Welde did not answer. He did not know what to say, but he was glad she seemed to have recovered her balance.

"It is perhaps best that we get away from here," he said and pulled his stockings on which he had hung up in the sun to dry. She had left her hat and coat

on the log, and when she got them on she looked quite presentable. When Welde was ready with his toilet they found they could go home without attracting attention.

It was fortunate that none had seen what had happened here by the river.

On the way home they agreed that she should go home with him first. He thought Jorgina would be discreet and not say anything about the matter.

CHAPTER XX

Jorgina was busying herself in the kitchen, but it was as if a cog had slipped somewhere. She couldn't find what she wanted to use, and when she found it she wondered what in the world she wanted to use it for. Time passed, it was near evening, and she was not thru; but she did not really know what was left undone either.

With trembling hands she put the coffee pot on the stove. She was going to take a match to light the gas, and pulled the box down from the shelf. When she bent to pick it up she noticed that her knees shook so that she had to sit down and rest. Something strange had happened—something dreadful. Her old brains had failed her entirely. Her memory could not register anything like it either at Pastor Nelson's of the United Church or Pastor Wangel's of the Synod. Pastor Welde had asked her not to say anything about it, and she knew what a servant's duties were. At present it was all that she did know.

She knew her duties. This thought gave her courage to recall what had happened. Before dinner the pastor comes home with a lady who is dripping wet. And he is dripping wet. Both were dripping wet. The one was more wet than the other. And when the pastor had asked her not to say anything about it,—because he did not want the girl's father, who was Pastor Mosevig, to know anything about it. Why shouldn't he know it? Then she had put the girl in a bedroom and had dried and ironed her clothes. She had been over by the door and had peeped in, and then the girl lay on her face in the bed, praying God to forgive her great sin. What kind of a sin was it? Both had been

dripping wet, and the girl had sobbed and cried. The pastor had paced up and down the floor of his study, and when she came to tell that dinner was ready he was staring at that Pilate picture which he did only when something had gone wrong. Both had been dripping wet. At the table he had been cheerful and gay and had joked about her blue wrapper that the girl had put on. One could learn nothing from him. The girl had left by the back way—that is—if she was a girl. No one could fool Jorgina. If that was a girl, she ought to have been a married woman. No one could fool her—and both had been dripping wet. She did not know that Mosevig had a married daughter, so this must be Ellen. She had heard about her.

But she knew what a servant's duties were, so she sat still and listened. From the study heavy steps were heard—back and forth, back and forth. Perhaps the pastor would like a cup of coffee. Instantly she was on her feet, lit the gas and set the pot on. Then she gathered up the matches and began to work. Now she knew what she was to do.

In the study, Welde was musing. He had become interested in the girl. She was so entirely alone with her grief. She must have been filled with despair. It seemed to him that his work in saving her was but half completed by getting her out of the water. He sank into a day-dream. What had just happened—was it not an omen, a sign? She certainly thought a great deal of this fellow that she had been going with, but still she might learn to love someone else. Fortunately, he knew that there were many happy marriages where they did not get those they loved the most. And wasn't it also the same way with himself? She had certainly not loved that fellow of hers more than he had loved Maggie—and loved her yet. They were in the same situation in regard to that, so they

might comfort each other as much as they could. It rose in him with warmth, that it was just they who could do that. His thoughts hovered about this. He had noticed a peculiar feeling towards her. He remembered that he thought most warmly about Maggie when he was far away from her. When he was near to her, she became ordinary flesh and blood—a human like all others, while he otherwise insisted on making something superhuman of her. The case of Ellen was exactly opposite. Away from her he could not bring himself to think much about her, but when he was near her, he felt an almost irrepressible desire to embrace her, to press her closely to himself as if in that way he could protect both her and himself. Why was it so?

And then he felt sorry for her, but that thought he quickly dismissed. He might with equally good reason be sorry for himself. But then there was that weeping of hers. He wondered if she had gone home. He hoped she had not gone to the river again. He ought to have said some encouraging words to her before she left. She had gone without saying good-bye—well, there was perhaps someone in the study when she left. He was a fine one at saving others, he was—why, he came near drowning himself—but fools are fortunate. Now—afterwards—he could easily think of a couple of ways in which he might have saved her without risking his own life. It seemed so easy now when he was here in his study.

But he was glad anyway. How dreadful it would have been for Mosevig if his daughter had died that way. He did not venture to think of it. It was too awful.

He felt almost relieved when Jorgina knocked on the door and asked if the pastor did not wish a cup of coffee. He needed some one to talk to.

"Say, Jorgina," he ventured, as he sat at the table, "I presume you have read in the papers that if a bachelor saves a girl from drowning he has to marry her?"

She pricked up her ears. No—she had never read nor heard anything like that.

The pastor was in good humor. "You mustn't tell it," he said, "but I really pulled this Ellen Mosevig out of the river today."

"Had she fallen in?" asked Jorgina.

"In some way she had gotten in," the pastor answered evasively. "I heard her cry for help and threw something out after her, but when I was to pull her out, I got in myself. That's the way it goes when one wants to be helpful."

Jorgina drew a sigh of relief. So that was how it happened that they both were dripping wet.

"It's too bad for her," the minister ventured to say.

"Too bad for her?" Jorgina started in as scandalized a tone as she, a servant, felt she might use. "Too bad for her? Yes, it is too bad for her if my eyes are not mistaken—but one can of course be mistaken—well, she certainly has got herself in trouble so it's too bad for her; but it is not suitable for a girl, even if she is elderly, to talk of this to young men, and least of all for one who is a servant, for I know what a servant's duties are; but it is too bad for her—yes, it surely is."

Jorgina nodded her old gray head. Her voice was a little scornful. She had proved that a girl could go thru life without losing her character, and she was not lenient toward those who had gone astray.

But she was almost frightened when she looked at the minister. He sat there silent and had turned very pale. After a while he rose dejectedly from the table, said good night and went into his study. When Jorgina cleared away, she saw that the cup was only half emptied. She shook her gray head sadly, and the

trembling began again. No,—she had not met with anything like this either at Pastor Nelson's of the United Church or at Pastor Wangel's of the Synod.

When she had cleared away the dishes, she seated herself by the door with her knitting and heard the pastor's footsteps in his office; back and forth—to and fro.

The clock struck nine, it struck ten, and she heard it strike eleven. She heard the steps; back and forth—to and fro. Her hands with her knitting fell into her lap. Then her glasses dropped. She woke from her nap, and the steps still sounded. Good Lord, doesn't he go to bed? She cast longing eyes on the coffee pot. She would heat it a little. She took off her shoes, so that he should not hear her.

Oh, dear!—The percolator plate fell on the floor. Her hands trembled so today—and there the minister stood in the door in the green dressing-gown with the red cords. Now he seemed really pleased when she turned around, in her fright.

Did she have anything left in the coffee pot? To be sure, she had. It was strange to see how happy and light-hearted he had become.

"I believe you and I will have to get married," he said, as he took a lump of sugar.

"Oh, I presume the pastor means that as a joke," laughed Jorgina somewhat constrained.

"Yes," he admitted dryly, "for you wouldn't have me anyway, such a big, ugly fellow as I am."

Then Jorgina had to laugh. But she could not get herself to say—even in a joke, that she might take him if he meant anything by it. She knew a servant's place.

"Well, then I'll have to ask someone else," he said gaily and bade her good night, and she saw his broad back fill the doorway as he slowly went into his room.

And now Jorgina could also rest, and it became dark and still in the parsonage.

CHAPTER XXI

The gossip raged like a fever in the congregation. At the services the church was filled as it used to be, and the ladies' aid had never been better attended; but the people seemed to be absent-minded, tho watching for further developments.

It proved to be very unfortunate that the minister had been so companionable to each and all. His courtesy was natural to him and had therefore brought him contempt. Quite instinctively they connected his affability with cowardice. There was something wrong with him, or else he wouldn't be that way. There was something he was afraid of, or he'd be more stuck-up. To begin with, some husband or wife felt flattered that he could remember the names of their children and that he would sit in their kitchen and tell them about his family and other private affairs, but when they found that he treated others the same way their vanity was wounded. If one had something to tell, showing how intimate he was with the minister, then there was always someone who knew still more. So they tried to out-vie each other. Welde was like an open book in which all could turn the leaves and read to their heart's content, and such a book may easily become soiled.

When he began to show himself on the street with Ellen Mosevig, they commenced to whisper. There must be some reason for his walking with her. She was well known. When it was rumored that she had gone wrong and that her father would not let her stay at home, then any one ought to get his eyes opened.

The gossip was raging everywhere. The wonderful thing had happened that Mrs. Andrew Thompson and Mrs. Berven had become friends. From the bank some

news always leaked out thru Mr. Berven to Mrs. Berven, and Mrs. Thompson heard different things at the Mosevig ladies' aid, which she now diligently attended. The two women needed each other now, and came to the same conclusion as several others, namely, that there was something wrong. They were of course very careful. That it was thoughtless on the part of the minister to show himself on the street with a girl who had run to dances in spite of being a minister's daughter, and who had a poor reputation—that they had all agreed on. And now, when this other thing came up—well, something was surely wrong.

Mrs. Ole Narvesen was all alone now. She took the minister's part by attacking her neighbors, Mrs. Thompson and Mrs. Berven. What Mrs. Berven was, that her washing showed—and her house—and the neglected children. Regarding Mrs. Thompson, she did not hesitate to repeat that old lutefisk story, and then the war was on. All had agreed that Mrs. Narvesen had become very proud and important since her husband had joined the temperance society. But she'd better take care. The old saloon was standing at the corner. Just wait! Mrs. Narvesen stood firm as a rock amidst all this gossip. The suspicion against the minister did not reach its aim when it knocked at her kitchen door. She had nice clothes to hang out now, and she hung them where they could be seen. The house was repaired and newly painted. Narvesen was constantly making repairs around his place. No one should come and say anything disparaging about the minister to her.

The men also became interested in this gossip and might be seen, standing in groups, discussing, in the factories, in the sawmills, and in the lumber yards. Some laughed, others shook their heads or nodded their approval.

Pastor Welde himself did not notice any of this and heard nothing. He mingled with his parishioners as before and attended to his duties. There were, however, those who saw a change in him—or thought they did, and that, of course, amounts to the same thing.

But there was one question: What did Mosevig think about this? He had made such a strange prayer last Sunday; he had asked for grace to forgive. Afterwards there were several that had noticed how, even in the Lord's Prayer, he had put special stress on the words, "As we forgive those who trespass against us." Many had thought of Pastor Welde then. Mosevig had also said something about the Lord letting His hour come when He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness. This much he had also said to Mrs. Thompson, that if it hadn't been for Pastor Welde, many things would have been different, but "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord."

And many felt sorry for Mosevig. He was in reality a better speaker than Pastor Welde. He never used any notes, but he spoke what the Spirit moved him to say, and it was the Spirit, of course, which counted.

The talk flowed from the humble homes to the better ones, and from them to the finest ones, and so it reached the Brootens at last.

Brooten was a man in the first place and also a business man. He knew that the flesh is weak; he had experience in regard to that and could add two and two together. He had not yet forgotten how Pastor Welde had put his will thru with regard to Larson's appointment as janitor. He became doubtful and suspicious, and at the supper table he let both his wife and his daughters know that now things were really going too far. He would put a stop to this before there

was a scandal. Both his interest in the congregation and his business interests demanded it. He would force Pastor Welde to resign.

But he met with opposition from unexpected quarters. His daughter Theodora would not believe all this gossip and took the pastor's part. As long as Welde was praised and applauded by all, she had kept herself back and had perhaps rather tried to hunt for his faults; but now when they began to talk ill about him, she warmly defended him. It might be that Welde felt sorry for Ellen. She remembered the incident about the hat at the young people's society.

Dr. Spohr ought to know about it. He was their family physician and a constant guest in their home. She could talk confidentially with him.

She told the doctor about the gossip. She knew he was a friend of Welde and wanted to hear what he thought about it.

When the doctor heard how serious this might become for the minister, he broke loose: "He is an idiot, —beg your pardon—a perfect idiot. What do you suppose? He'll take her into his own house if her father sends her away. At least he says so. It is his Christian duty, he says—Christian duty to take care of a giddy girl who ought to be horse whipped."

"But do you think he will do it?" asked Theodora.

"Yes, to be sure he will; there's no doubt about that; but of course it will never do, so I've about made up my mind to take her myself if it becomes necessary. It is not so bad for me as it is for him. He suffers from a mania of benevolence—one can do nothing with him."

"But why not send her away, to some relatives or something? that is quite usual under such circumstances."

The doctor shook his head energetically. "You

don't know Mr. Welde," he said. "I can assure you that that would be as far from him as to give a hungry tramp who knocks at his door here in town an order on Finstad's restaurant in Chicago."

"But he has no kind of obligation toward this daughter of Mosevig."

"Go and tell him that, Miss Brooten," said the doctor almost triumphantly. "No, he is crazy, you see. He is in love with the case."

"In love with Miss Mosevig, you mean?"

"No, not exactly with her, but rather with her case. It is a theological infatuation—her depravity and misery and helplessness is what he is enamoured of—head over heels."

"Well, I must say, I don't admire his taste," said Theodora. "I thought ministers would hate those—cases as you call them."

"Yes," said the doctor with some hesitation, "you're right in that. It has often both surprised and provoked me how those who are themselves morally clean can be so confounded lenient with those who are immoral. They seem to lack the premises or requirements necessary to understand immorality, and are filled with pity instead of anger. The so-called 'pure in heart,' morally speaking, often present shocking examples of—yes, lack of zeal against immorality. Thus women forgive more easily than men because they are of a cleaner nature. There are some of us, ugly beasts, who are always fighting the old Adam, you know, and where he time and time again gets the best of us, we are apt to be more bitter towards him than those who haven't had so much trouble with him."

Theodora got ready to go. "Do you believe Welde will agree to your taking care of Miss Mosevig in his place?"

"I must of course lie to him and talk about my poor

wife, who needs another lazy thing around her so as to give the lazy creature we already have something to do—and then he'll take pity on us and let us have her, I think."

Theodora laughed. "It's nice of you to keep an eye on him," she said as she rose to go. "I should wish," she said, a little mischievously, "that you men would be just as helpful towards poor girls that have not gone astray."

"There, by Jove, you said a word of wisdom, Miss Brooten," the doctor exclaimed laughing and bowed her gallantly out of the office.

Theodora walked triumphantly homeward. Her tall, stately figure swept the sidewalk with a determined air. Pastor Welde had been brave. The fat doctor said he was crazy, but they always said that about anyone who did anything unusual. Her heart beat loudly, and this made her cheeks glow. Now she also wanted to be in the game. Papa must be managed carefully.

Very diplomatically she put the case before her father. She was willing to admit that the pastor had acted foolishly; but he felt sorry for the girl, and he would shame Mosevig by showing him that he would help her. If people didn't always want to believe the worst, they would understand what a fine trait this was in Welde. He had considered himself secure from all such suspicions, and here it was that he had reckoned without his host. The fact was, that Mosevig had wanted to shut the door on his own daughter, what no real Christian would do, even to a stranger. Then Welde had looked after her a little, so that Mosevig should take the hint and keep her at home. Now Mosevig does not dare but make a virtue of a necessity. What a shame it would have been for the Norwegians in town if she had been compelled to go to the associated charities or make away with herself.

She sat as she usually did when talking business with her father—with her elbows resting on the table, while the two white forefingers formed a point towards him. He enjoyed seeing her that way. The intelligent eyes were his own. All said she had his eyes.

He emptied his meerschaum pipe and refilled it thoughtfully. Suddenly he looked up at her, his eyes twinkling good humoredly. He could add two and two together. "He is no fool, that Welde," he said at last. "We are the ones that have been stupid. Well, well,—we'll have to see. Now you must sing, 'Can old Norway be forgotten' to me."

"That old jingle?"

"Yep."

"And drag a little on every syllable?"

"Yes."

"And a distinctive nasal twang?"

"Yes,—get it natural."

Theodora sat down to the piano and sang. It was her father's favorite song—the song above all songs. She had sung it so often that she was quite tired of it. But if she didn't sing it, she ran the risk of having him sing it himself, and that was worse.

So she sang to him and did her best. Brooten sat very devout and enjoyed both the words and the music, and the large, round head kept time without knowing it, by nodding quite perceptibly.

When she was thru he rose, stretched himself with evident satisfaction and kicked out with his legs, first with one and then with the other. Then he walked quickly out thru the sitting room.

Theodora knew he went to take a drink.

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A couple of days later, she and her mother went to Pastor Welde to get him along for an automobile ride. Theodora directed the trip, and they went mostly

thru the streets where the people of their own church lived; so now they could see.

And they did see—and agreed that it was here as in the old country: The big-bugs stuck together.

CHAPTER XXII

Pastor Welde walked up and down the floor pondering on something. Now and then he placed himself in front of the window and looked out. The autumn wind chased a cloud of dust along the street. In its wake followed dry leaves and other rubbish that it had swept together and now was playing with. It had been shaking the leaves all summer thru, and now it had at last gotten hold of them and had fun with them. Here and there new leaves came that the wind had gathered up in the gutter. They came rushing headlong, like small wheels, to unite themselves with the rest of the rubbish that the wind was playing with.

They were light-footed now, when they were torn from trunk and branches and the sun had taken back what he had given. The trees stood there naked and angry and let the wind whistle its song of triumph among their branches. The gray old trunks had seen a lot of leaves fall. It was only the branches that beat each other. "Ye are the branches." The branches thought they were robbed of everything and did not know better than to hit each other, but the trunk remained firm. It had its roots deep down in the ground, and the wind could not reach to the roots. The leaves were only the outer covering, a beauty that comes and goes again, a dress that may be laid aside. And the fewer the leaves the more power of resistance. The branches would become pliable. It did not hurt to develop this quality in them.

He found a cigar. Smoking was not a bad invention for a bachelor. There was a bit of warmth, a small

glow that one could keep alive in that way—and that was company.

It was a hard blow when he heard of Ellen's condition. He remembered that first night when he had walked to and fro and could not collect his thoughts. His first feeling had been one of disgust—the next indignation. He could at pleasure let his disgust or indignation be uppermost, according to whether he thought of her or of her parents.

But his duty had always been clear to him. He remembered that he had gotten hold of her, as he lay and splashed in the water, and had held fast. It was natural for him not to let go when he had hold of something that would sink. He doubled his hand and looked at his firm fist with evident pride. His hand was not good at hitting but to take hold of something and not let go—that had been his specialty since childhood.

As he gradually had made himself familiar with the thought of her condition, the feeling of disgust and indignation gave way to the positive feeling that he must help her—that he, perhaps, was the only one who could help her.

The door-bell rang. It was Ole Narvesen's wife. The pastor conducted her into his study, asked her to sit down and inquired about the children. Yes, they were all very well, thank you.

Mrs. Narvesen sat a while, but was not at ease. She shook her handkerchief, folded and unfolded it on her lap. Her face was still more grave than usual. Her busy fingers worked nervously with the handkerchief. At last she blurted out her errand. Did the minister know how the people in the congregation were talking about him? She had felt that he ought to know it, and before she quite realized it she was telling about what Mrs. Thompson had told Mrs. Larson and what

Mrs. Larson had told her that Mrs. Berven had said to Mrs. Storlie. After she had made a good start her story came faster. Tears came, and she thought it was just dreadful. She had always said—

But Pastor Welde had risen to his feet. He looked more serious than she had ever seen him before. He placed himself right in front of her and pointed toward the door. Then it was as tho something went to pieces in the good woman. The minister opened the door. "Mrs. Thompson and Mrs. Berven belong to the congregation as well as yourself, and I don't want to hear what they have said or not said."

"But they slander you, they say all kinds of bad things about you.—"

"That isn't any worse than when you say bad things about them."

"Yes, but I thought—"

"No, you did not think at all, Mrs. Narvesen, or you would not have come here with this. Mrs. Thompson and Mrs. Berven had good reasons for their suspicion. You must understand that yourself, that there is ground for suspicion, so it is not queer at all that people talk."

Mrs. Narvesen walked down the steps quite bewildered and out on the street. She would not have believed this. She thought she was doing the pastor a service, and then he had taken the part of those that were slandering him. It must be true, then, what they were telling. But she would not let it go any further. The tears came to her eyes again, but she dried them bravely. When she came home, she scrubbed the kitchen and stairs. Her tears mingled with the suds. The minister would not have treated any of the high-toned women in the church like that. She wouldn't open her mouth to take his part again.

Pastor Welde paced angrily up and down the floor

of his study. What had he done? He had tried to help a girl who was on the down grade. Now all tried to keep his hand back. Did they not see that a human being might be lost? Were they all so afraid of sullyng their hands? Why should they worry about his hands? If they themselves would not help, they ought to let him do so; not only for those in his congregation, but for all that were suffering and had gone astray.

He saw the girl before him then as she lay there by the river, huddled together. She was still only a child, so to speak. How easy, how dreadfully easy it was to sit in judgment instead of helping her.

His eye glanced at the picture. They had once brought to Jesus a woman who was caught in the very act. She had also stood before an angry mob of Pharisees and scribes like the accused one in the picture. Hers had been a clear case. She should be stoned, but before the execution they took her before Jesus to try Him. Did He feel disgusted? Was He indignant? That was nobody's business but His own. He wrote something—the only thing that we know He ever wrote—and He wrote it in the sand—that was the way He kept records of such cases. He did not want it to be preserved. He had said that the one that was without sin among them should cast the first stone. How clean and pure was this person, Conrad Walther Welde? He was not clean enough to throw the fatal stone. Christ, who was without sin, could have done it, but did not want to.

Pastor Welde remained standing in deep thought and drew lines on the carpet with his foot. It was divided into squares. While he thought of Ellen, something in his brains was working independently with those squares: Four small, one larger, four larger, one big, four big ones formed a very large one,

four very large ones the whole. Every square had four equal sides. It was the correctness of it which gave the right proportion and eventually conquered the whole.

What had come between him and Ellen Mosevig? Her false step—her sin—her great sin. It had turned his pity to disgust and indignation.

He might help her anyway—but overlook and forgive? No! Had she sinned against him then? No! She had sinned against her parents—and God. Still he had to judge. But grant that God had forgiven her—that her parents had forgiven her—should he still sit in judgment? He to whom she need render no account?

He turned on his heel. She had fallen deeply, that was certain.

She must have been in despair and wept bitterly.

He had to think of the father also. What a blow it must have been to the poor man! He could see him before him, more threadbare and cowed than ever. This grown-up daughter had perhaps been his pride.

Now people would have something to talk about. The other ministers would meet on the street and tell each other the news. The poor man would feel the ill-natured glances piercing his back when he sneaked thru the streets.

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There was often a light in the minister's study till far out into the night. Mrs. Narvesen had been right. There certainly had been a lot of gossip.

His parishioners had become so strangely distant. They seemed so far away from him. He preached as usual, but a chill came from the upturned faces. A peculiar feeling of lonesomeness came over him. He was alone—almost entirely alone. Even the stained

glass windows seemed strange. He stepped as carefully into the chancel as if he had been in a strange place. At home he was also like a stranger. Jorgina seemed ten years older, and she spoke only about the most necessary things regarding the housekeeping. There was even a strange sound in her shoes as she walked about in the sitting room.

The nights were the worst; often he couldn't sleep. He had never been troubled with sleeplessness before. When he looked in the mirror, his face seemed strange. It was sallow, and his cheek bones were more prominent than before.

He loved happy faces. He had often warmed himself in the happy smiles he caught on the street or in the meetings. Now he went about all alone and forsaken.

It pained him to see that many of the ministerial acts that really belonged to him now went to the other minister. Not that he begrudged him, but it was a sign that the congregation was slipping away from him.

At this time he often thought of Ellen. Someone who would love him and with whom he could share his troubles, someone that he had a sort of claim on, someone he could do a lot for and who would be happy over it.

He began to hunger for love. He bought candy and put in his pockets and gave to children on the street. They looked at him and laughed, ran away and often forgot to thank him. Then he called them back and gave them more. They came slowly, but their eyes were greedy. When he saw this, he stopped giving candy to the children.

He took his walks and looked about to see if there was anyone he could help. He offered to assist an

expressman in lifting a trunk, and he wanted to carry a little girl across a muddy street. The expressman thanked him politely and said it wasn't necessary, and the little girl screamed.

CHAPTER XXIII

It was quite remarkable how much they now could find to say about Pastor Welde. He was not the man they thought he was. To be sure, the church attendance had been good, but the church treasury was in a poor condition. They easily agreed that he was too fine—a swell dude—and that they were the ones that paid for the fine clothes, so he might have been a little more saving. There were also so many poor people. But when the conversation took another turn, they were equally agreed that he did not have the dignity of the old minister. To sit and drink coffee at Ole Narvesen's—all knew what Narvesen had been—and might become again. Besides, to go anywhere, among all kinds of people, and be friends with all,—even with half grown young people—that surely was not proper or becoming for a minister.

They had a feeling that he was not what he pretended to be—and so the suspicion fell into good soil when this incident with Ellen Mosevig became known.

The ultra-religious had for a long time had a household of their own, as it were, in the church. They held small gatherings by themselves, and into these otherwise devotional meetings the talk about the pastor's conduct crept in. They agreed that the worst of it was that no one knew anything positive.

It was therefore felt as a great relief when Mrs. Storlie at last came with her account. She had kept it for more than a year and a half, and she had never intended to say anything about this, which only she and God in heaven had seen. From the other side of the street she had seen the minister standing with his arm around that woman from Trondhjem, who moved

away from town shortly after her husband had obtained a divorce from her. People knew what she was. She had been with the Methodists and Baptists and the Free-free, and when she at last began to speak in unknown tongues, her husband had asked for a divorce. The brethren in the circle remembered her as a rather handsome and very self-seeking woman, and this harmonized. She was of the right kind, she was. And Mrs. Storlie did not lie, that they knew very well. She did not run around telling lies. Here she, poor woman, had carried this hidden in her own breast for over a year and a half without breathing it to a living soul. Such faithfulness had to be rewarded at last.

The more worldly ones in the church had never been pleased with the minister. There may be such a thing as too much preaching against drinking and dancing; some moderation ought to be used. There should be no politics in the church and the minister was not afraid of handling the cards when there was a chance. But he did not preach against card playing. Instead he denounced betting and all kinds of gambling. He got up games for the young people, and some of these were really dances of some kind. No, the trouble was that he wanted to be the boss and to run the whole congregation. To take a glass of beer or whiskey was wrong; but the drunkards—he actually seemed to sympathize with them. Hadn't he said that in one way it was better for the children if the father was a drunkard than if he was a moderate drinker? Those were fine doctrines to impress on the children—against their own parents.

But then there was the solid old stock of permanent members who always discharged their duties; who had built the church and who had faithfully stood by the congregation. They had had their legs knocked

from under them, as it were. He preached "good works," this Welde. It wasn't enough that they felt contrition and repentance over their sins. He had even said that the publicans who did not get farther than to smite their breast to show how humble they were compared to the Pharisees, were themselves worse Pharisees than those they meant to put to shame. It was better not to repent than to repent by rote. This might be taken as making light of repentance, which was the necessary requirement for grace. The old minister had certainly been better. In his time there was real repentance in the congregation. Now one should do this and that, and let this and that alone, till there was scarcely anything to feel repentant about.

They grieved over this and other things, which they felt that they in some way had been cheated out of during Welde's short ministry.

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They ought to have an extra congregational meeting, but this was frustrated by Brooten and the big-bugs in the church. The big ones always stuck together. Besides, there was nothing to call a meeting about either. The trouble was not in the doctrine, but rather in his way of preaching. Matters would have to rest until that story about the Mosevig girl was cleared up. A slight hope dawned, as it were, that there might be something in it, tho they added devoutly: God forbid it.

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Pastor Welde had fought a hard battle. He had, so to speak, "lain on his face." They had come before him, father, mother, friends—all had passed in review before his soul. He seemed to hear his mother's voice: "Now you must take care, Conrad," and all the others: "Now you must take care: Remember,

Conrad,—she is a fallen woman. What do you think your brother clergymen will say? What will the congregation say?" Maggie Cornell came before him. Would he give up his calling for a fallen woman, when he would not give it up for her? His reason said it was wrong; his sense of justice said it was wrong; common sense said it was foolish. Still something lay gnawing inside of him and whispering incessantly: "Do it! She will be so happy. Do it, and her old father will straighten his back and obtain reparation. Do it, and she will be saved."

Yes, saved—suppose she should go to the river again. Would he not then consider himself a murderer? She was so helpless, so totally helpless. Suppose the parents should shut the door, no friends, no means—and she only eighteen years old! Something must be done for her. Should he again throw himself into the deep water?

But how, in what way?

He buried his face in the sofa pillows. He called for help like one who gropes in the dark, along the edge of a deep chasm.

He rose at last and got ready to go out. In the dim light, he saw the two white figures on the picture shining thru the dusk.

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He felt that he went along the sidewalk with firm, elastic steps. He had all at once become light-hearted. He had imagined that it would be a heavy walk, and instead he felt as if wafted along.

He reached the street where Mosevig's church lay, and there was the parsonage by the side of it. His heart beat a little faster as he rang the-doorbell. He felt composed and light of heart, however, and his breast was filled with joy. He had come on an important mission, like one who is about to pay a debt.

The minister's wife opened the door and stood a moment confused and looked at the big man, who filled the doorway and who stood politely with hat in hand. Was the pastor at home? With one hand she pushed the most inquisitive of the youngsters back and with the other pointed to a door with a scarcely audible: "He's in there, please."

Welde stepped into the room that served Mosevig as a study. He sat filing a saw blade and rose in surprise and pointed to a chair.

"Sit down, please. This is an unexpected visit. You must excuse, I'm busy with some work, so it's a little untidy in here."—"Keep the door shut," he said harshly to his wife, who tried to pull the children away from the half open door. Then he rose, brushed his trousers with his hand and looked at Welde with an uneasy and embarrassed air: Why had he come?

Pastor Welde was also embarrassed. He felt now as if he had nothing to do here. By what right had he intruded? The pity he had felt for Mr. Mosevig had left him all at once. "Go home and mind your own business," a voice said within him. He checked his aversion and came to the point at once.

He wanted to ask if the pastor had made any decision in regard to his daughter. He had promised—or more correctly—he had decided to do what he could for her; but first he wanted to know if there was anything in what he had heard, that they intended to send her away.

Pastor Mosevig had again taken his saw blade, which he examined with the practiced eye of a carpenter. He did not like the subject. What did it matter to Welde what he intended to do? But he yielded to his respect for the man as he was seated before him.

He mumbled a little and said, he must first know

the will of God in this case, "Not my will, but thine," that was always his first consideration.

Pastor Welde was silent.

Mosevig sighed deeply. An expression of helplessness came over him. As in a panorama he saw his daughter's shame spread out before him, in his own house—by the one he least of all could hear it from. His lips began to tremble. He fought his tears. Welde saw this, and something in his own breast was touched. He hid his agitation with an effort.

"I can easily realize," he said, "what a dreadful blow this would be under all circumstances and especially for a minister. If there is anything I can help you with ——."

"I have loved her so—I've loved this girl of mine so much ——" Mosevig finally burst out. "She has been our child of sorrows—I've never understood her very well. She has gone her own way."

"Well, — what's done is done. One must try to save what can be saved," Mr. Welde ventured.

"We must leave it in the hands of God."

"She ought not to be sent out among strangers, for she has a very fickle temper, and she must stay with some one who loves her and will be good to her."

There was an almost malignant gleam in Mosevig's eyes. "Is this what you came to tell me? Do you think I shall give up my work—for what will people say? Should I bolster her up, besides?"

"But she is your child."

Was that what he had come to tell him? Didn't he have enough before? What right did this man have to mix up in his family affairs?

He leaned over towards Welde and asked in a voice that shook with agitation:

"You don't think I've had enough, then, since you are coming to throw this in my teeth?"

Pastor Welde understood at once that he had been very tactless towards Mosevig. He bent his head resignedly and said in a low voice: "I beg your pardon. It is this way. I have become very much interested in her—am attracted to her in a way, and I am afraid she might fare ill if she is sent away."

"You want to interfere then when the Lord punishes the sin?"

Well, yes,—he meant something like that.

"And if I don't want to keep her at home—out of regard for my calling, for instance, then you'll perhaps take care of her?"

Yes, he had thought so.

"As your daughter, then?" came in repressed indignation.

"I had thought most likely as my wife," Pastor Welde said with forced composure. When he had said this he breathed more easily and added: "Of course it depends on her—and on you also."

"You don't know, then—?"

"I think I know as much about it as you do."

Pastor Mosevig sat and stared fixedly at the young man. Was he crazy? That was why he had walked about with her. A "ha-ha!" escaped him. So that's the way it was. His freckled fingers fumbled with his beard. "You mean to give up your calling, then?"

"If it is necessary, it might be done."

He said this with the utmost composure.

Pastor Mosevig sat staring right ahead. Now he had the upper hand; Welde certainly did not understand that such a union would ruin them both. He must be crack-brained, this Welde.

It was best to get thru with it at once.

"Ellen is already engaged—and in a way can be said to be married to another, so it's best to wait and see what comes of that," he said.

It was as if someone had struck Welde in the face with a wet cloth. He ought to have known this. He was a fool—stark mad as Dr. Spohr used to say. He sat there silent and embarrassed.

Mosevig was now on top and must make the most of his victory.

"Perhaps you see it yourself too, now, that it was quite unbecoming of you to keep company with a girl who was promised to someone else."

"That may be right," Welde said quietly; "but," he added, "you will keep her at home then!"

"Oh, as regards that, it must, in God's name, take its course."

Welde rose to take his leave. "Thank you," he said. "I hope you'll be good to her—or it might happen that I'd come and take her anyway." He said this in as gay a tone as he could muster.

When he left he again had to pass thru the flock of children and past the wife who opened the door for him. He smiled at the children and asked one of them what his name was. The boy gave his mother a frightened look, and she looked toward the door of the study. Mosevig did not like to have any one make much of children. "You seem to be a smart boy," said Welde. "Can you run errands?" The boy nodded behind his mother's skirt. "Take this and buy some oranges for the little ones and a great big one for yourself because you're a bright little fellow." The boy took the half dollar, and the mother smiled. "Thank him nicely." The boy put out a fat little hand. "Goodbye!—Goodbye!"

It felt good to get out on the street, out of the close and stuffy air. Welde scarcely knew whether to laugh or cry; but he had this arranged anyway. He had not gone far before he heard the patter of small feet behind him. It was the boy who came back with

the half dollar. He returned it without saying a word and pattered off again; but Welde had seen that the little child-face was distorted by repressed tears.

He walked slowly along with the coin in his hand—he knew not what to do with it.

It was good to get home.

Jorgina was in better humor tonight and asked if he did not want some coffee.

There was nothing that he would rather have.

CHAPTER XXIV

Pastor Welde always saw a case more clearly when he had more time—and when the case already was decided some way or other. Now, when he was by himself, he saw that he had acted very unwisely. Why should he concern himself about this Mosevig? He was a nasty customer in reality, cringing towards others and brutal towards his family. Perhaps Dr. Spohr had been right when he said that the more “pious” a husband is, the more cowed is his wife. It scarcely ever failed, he said. It was a shame that such things could be said. It would almost be a blessing for Mosevig’s church and the Lutheran church in general if such a man could be sent back to his carpenter work again.

“But he is getting old and is said to be in poor health,” a voice whispered.

Oh, yes, it was said that he was in poor health now, but there were many carpenters that had to stand it, even if they were in poor health. He was not too sickly to be brutal, and towards his own family at that. “But you know what trials he has had — what has made him so bitter?” the voice whispered again.

Yes, he had suffered. Welde stopped pacing the floor.

Brrr! The telephone rang. He took the receiver down. It was a sick call from one of the parishioners out in the country. They did not expect him to live thru the night—could the minister come and see him at once? Yes, he would come.

He telephoned to all the livery barns in town, but none had any teams that they could send out. This had never happened to him before. Then he thought

of Brooten's automobile, and telephoned to them to hear if they would let Jim, the boy, take him out. He would pay the boy for his trouble. He waited a while, and Brooten answered that the boy was out on a lark—as he usually was, but that Theodora could go along. She could handle the machine all right, but they must drive carefully. The minister thanked him for the offer. He thought they'd be able to manage it.

He took his small handbag and got ready. One never had to wait long for the Brootens. Soon the car stopped by the sidewalk.

It was a bit humiliating to have her drive. He seated himself by her side. He laughingly suggested that, while they were inside the city limits, where it was light, he would also take hold of the steering wheel and make faces as tho he were steering. They both laughed, and then whizzed along. Theodora's small gloved hand held the wheel firmly. There was something reliable about her. She was born to direct things.

When they reached the country road they had to go more slowly.

They got there safely, and Theodora was also asked to come in. It was a highly respected man in the prime of life who was dying. The minister knew him as a reserved, self-sacrificing man who had been faithful in discharging his duties. Now when he was to die, he was sorely troubled, because he had not confessed the name of Jesus before his fellow men. Would Jesus now confess him before His heavenly Father? The Word of God said No, and it caused him anguish. One of the neighbors was also present. He had the gift of preaching and testifying, and used his gifts very frequently.

When the minister had prayed and read a portion of Scripture to the sick man, this subject came up. The sick man's eyes rested anxiously on the minister.

What would he say? Pastor Welde took this more calmly than the neighbor who sat by the door, clearing his throat ominously. There were several that Jesus had healed and whom he had given the command that they should say nothing about it. Why? Well, He knew best for what reason; but thus it was. To some He had only said: "Follow me!" He only asked that they should obey. Had these followers a clear perception of Jesus? Did they believe that He was the Son of God? Did they understand His mission? One would have to answer that they scarcely did. It was evident that even the best of the disciples did not have any clear perception of the mission of Jesus but they followed Him as well as they understood, and He did not demand more. He knew their hearts, and they should receive more knowledge at the appointed time.

But the testimony—the neighbor moved uneasily on his chair. Did the pastor think it unnecessary to confess the name of Jesus before men and tell others that they loved Jesus and were willing to take up their cross?

The minister turned to the neighbor. For some it was necessary to bear witness; but the testimony was not the most important thing. Smiling half sadly he said: "I know one who was very fond of a girl. He was so fond of her that she was ever in his thoughts. Even the street she walked and the house she lived in were house and street above all other houses and streets in the world. He could have kissed the dust where her feet had trod; but he did not tell a living soul how much he loved her—but carried it within himself. It might have been better for him if he could have told about it; still the love was there. There was no doubt of that. And if the girl had been om-

niscient and had known his heart she would have known that it beat for her and for no one else."

The neighbor became still more uneasy on his chair. Would the minister compare anything worldly like this with the spiritual? Was this what they learned in the theological schools that the common people had to give money to? He coughed and groaned, and an incredulous "hm" escaped him, but he said nothing. The minister continued to talk as if only to himself. There were married people that loved each other very tenderly, but they did not go around talking about it continually. They had plighted their troth once, and that was binding. They did not need any new assurance. He was hers, and she was his. He sometimes had a feeling of distrust towards those who went about fanning the air and boasting of their great love for God and the Church. They often did the least when they should show their love by doing something for the cause of God.

The sick man listened, and a look of peace came over the pale face. He had tried to give according to his means. Then the minister turned to him with this direct question: "You have not known of any other direct way of salvation than thru Jesus Christ and Him crucified?" To this he could answer No with glad confidence. The minister talked about the home above so feelingly that both the sick man's wife and Theodora were deeply moved and sat listening as if it was to them as much as to the sick man he was talking. Death is the door to be opened when someone is ready to enter. First one, then another. Happy are those that are admitted. Then he asked Theodora to sing "Gates Ajar." She had a pleasing, tho not strong voice, and she sang. He joined in the chorus, and even the neighbor grunted a little. The pastor then administered the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper and

uttered a short but heartfelt prayer. When he bid farewell, the dying man held his hand for a long time. There was a gleam of thankfulness and security in the dim eyes. "We'll meet again, then, Pastor Welde, beyond the river," he said in his feeble voice. Welde turned aside in order to hide his feelings. "By the help of God, we shall," he said.

The neighbor went out with him. Welde talked a little to him. Theodora heard only the last words: "You must be kind, and do not make him uneasy by saying that he should have testified more. It may be so, but you must not disturb him with this now."

The neighbor remained standing in deep meditation—he stood on the same spot till he began to get cold. So it was good deeds that Welde preached! Give plenty to the minister, then you're all right. He thought of the six dollars a year he gave to the upkeep of the congregation, two to the inner mission, and five to the heathens, besides tickets to the church festivals, and fifteen dollars when the church was built. Yes, that would surely open the gates, he thought, with a touch of bitterness. No, one must testify, that is more safe—and—even if one gives all his possessions it will not help anyway. But if he did not lose the fifteen hundred dollars he had invested in mining stock, then he also would give more. If it had gone the way he had thought, he would have given a great deal—ten per cent of what he had made. Now he would give liberally if he only could get back what he had invested. In a martyr-like mood he went into the house. He would let people know how this minister had mixed the wordly and spiritual things together and made a mess of it. Here one certainly had to bear witness if one had the cause of God at heart—not only as a matter of finance. To give is of the flesh and will get its reward in the flesh. But that which is born

of the Spirit is Spirit. There are too many worldly ministers of the Gospel nowadays.

It annoyed him that he had not said this when the minister was present. He would, however, make up for it by testifying with regard to this before the church members that lived out there in the country. It might be that he would have something to tell the minister, too, after he had talked with the others.

In the meantime the automobile rolled along rather slowly towards town.

Theodora was touched. It was the first time she had been at such a sick-bed, and she had sung for the sick man. All that the minister had said was quite right, she thought. She wondered if he meant himself when he said that he knew a person who loved someone so much. She also knew what it was to love without saying anything about it. She had friends who ran across the street to tell every time they were "dead in love," but they did not die from it—those who ran about and chattered. It was only on the surface. She felt a desire to do or say something that might please this big man who now sat so silent by her side. She did have something good to tell him. When the conversation after a while drifted on to the gossip in the congregation, she could inform him that not a small part of it could be traced back to Mosevig and his people. "But papa has taken hold now, and he will put a stop to it." Welde wanted to know in what way. Theodora tossed her head. She wished to arouse his curiosity. He asked again; she did not want to tell at once, but he persisted.

"Then you must promise not to let on at all."

"It is so dangerous, then?"

"No, not exactly; but it is just this much, that we can get rid of this preacher who only goes about speaking ill of you."

"Do you believe he does that?"

"What do you think he does, then? From whom do you think this comes that you preach only to make a living and teach good deeds and all that—you don't think the common people would think of such things, do you?"

"There is some truth in that, Miss Brooten. I may have dwelt too much on **this**, that people must **live** as Christians."

"Oh, pshaw—there are also those who think that you are not so particular—that you—."

"That I—what?"

"Well, then, that you have been with the young people and gotten up games, that you smoke, that you play whist with Dr. Spohr and that you keep company with such as the Narvesens and other 'common' people—and—." Theodora made a sweeping motion with her hand, "and hobnob with the swell people like Brootens and others of the same kind. You are both too much and too little on good deeds, and you are too easy-going and let people do as they please, and then you are too set and want to have your own way. You praise those that should be admonished and find fault with those that should be praised. You are a respecter of persons and you are not. You talk above our heads so we cannot follow you, and so simply that there is nothing to it. Can't you understand it?"

She laughed so that her head nearly touched the steering wheel.

The minister had to laugh also; but at the same time he felt that there was a serious side to it.

And he grew indignant.

He was aware of it. There were some that tried to undermine him and his congregation—sowing discord and mistrust.

"I trust it will be seen that I also have friends in

the congregation who will be on guard and defend me," he said at last.

"That you have," comforted Theodora. "Ole Narvesen's wife, she has fought bravely for you down there on Garfield Avenue. I tell you, she holds her own. She's more than a match for them."

Pastor Welde was quite confused. Why, it was she that he had shown the door!

He remained sitting there silent. Theodora understood that he was depressed and came to his relief at once. "Well, I'll tell you," she said, "but you mustn't let papa know that I have said it. He wanted it to be a surprise, I think. Papa has a mortgage on Mosevig's church, and he never remembers the interest. Papa has always had trouble with him. He has given him notice, and now papa says if he does not come tomorrow he will turn the key in the door—and that is the end of it."

Welde gave a start. "But will he do it?" he asked.

"He does not like to do it," said Theodora. "He has no earthly use for that church, and he can't get two hundred dollars for it from any one, so he'll lose his money. He thinks it can be moved and fixed up for a school house. The idea is to get Mosevig away from here. Just think—he has really said that you offered to marry his daughter, but he said No—out of regard for you and your calling—he was so noble."

She laughed in a constrained manner.

Pastor Welde laughed in the same way. "It would not be nice of me to say he was fibbing," he said evasively. "He ought to be glad and thankful to get a son-in-law of any kind now," he added with a touch of gayety.

There was something in his voice that Theodora did not like, and the conversation took another turn.

They had now reached town and drove up to Broo-

ten's. Theodora put the car in herself, and the pastor said goodnight and thanked her warmly for the fine ride and paid her a compliment or two for her skill in handling a car. He then walked home afoot.

There were lights both in the sitting room and in the kitchen. Jorgina sat half asleep and waited for him. It was tiresome to sit this way and wait, but she knew a servant's duties. Both Wangel of the Synod and Nelson of the United had been so glad to get a lunch after returning from a sick call at night.

CHAPTER XXV

It was way after midnight. Pastor Welde sat in an easy chair with his feet on the library table. Tired of thinking of other things, he was amused to see his feet on the table. His feet in the slippers were his uniformed subjects serving as sentinels in the moonlight. The moon was the lamp, that burned dimly, the enemy was Jorgina, who woke if he only moved.

He was tired, and his eyes smarted, but sleep—that was impossible. Was it the coffee, perhaps?

He had gone to bed, feeling in a way light at heart. He had had a fine ride. Theodora was a reliable girl; not a bit affected or put on. She was dependable, and was careful about what she said. It was like being with a sensible aunt, who had a remedy for everything and on whom one could rely. No foolishness or sentimentality about her.

He was fond of dwelling on this, for there was something else that continually forced itself on him, and he was afraid of it. It was really this that kept him awake tonight.

It was this, that as soon as he closed his eyes, Mosevig stood before him with his protruding mouth and the threadbare coat: how would it be with him when Brooten turned the key in the church door?—But it served Mosevig right—yes, it certainly served him right.

To think that such a man should stand in the pulpit and preach the Word of God, one who wanted to shut the door on his own daughter, one who was a tyrant in his own home, but meek as a rag in appearance when outside of it, one who thought evil and sowed evil seed in the congregation of others.

He ought to be chased away.

Welde remembered that his father had spoken of a colleague of the same kind. He had helped him repeatedly and had received annoyances in return. "Skunk," that was what his father had called him. The skunk is a nice looking animal, and one might want to pet it, he said; but one must take care lest he get into trouble. This animal has a peculiar nature.

Hadn't he gone about and felt pity for this fellow, at least he had wished he could help him, he had tried to be good to him—and then this—what would you call him?—went and stirred up bad blood in the congregation.

If he only had had tact enough not to say anything about this that he, Pastor Welde, had contemplated, namely, to take care of Ellen—in her present condition.

He felt vexed and troubled about this as he was lying there, and these thoughts drove sleep away from his couch.

It was bad enough to undermine a fellow-worker's influence; but it was still worse to drive wedges in so as to split the church of God. One did not need a large wedge either — only put it there and then quietly get away without assuming any responsibility. There were plenty of those that saw the wedge and did not know any better than to drive it in, seeing it stood there — and then to make use of his own daughter's disgrace in order to put the wedge there—and against one who had exposed himself to a number of disagreeable things in order to help him.

These were the thanks he got.

Such a man ought to be ousted.

He had in fact offered and been willing to share this burden with Mosevig—the disgrace, one might say. The thanks he got was that Mosevig let it be reported

that he, Welde, driven by—qualms of conscience presumably—had offered to marry his daughter—or stood so low that he was glad to get her, the way she was. Could one imagine anything more despicable?

It was such thoughts as these that at last drove him out of bed. He breathed more easily now when he sat ensconced in the easy chair, with a cigar between his fingers and his two subjects on guard and under observation. In reality his own conduct had been peculiar, in fact very unwise. It was perhaps, after all, not so strange that Mosevig figured things out the way he did. Possibly he had lain awake nights for the same reason. He had at any rate only followed the lines of least resistance. It ought to be possible to get this matter cleared. Ellen had received letters from her fellow. She had been frank enough to ask him to read these letters. He did not want to do this. He had let matters rest with what she had told him, that Jack had gone away, when he understood how things were, and that she did not want to have any more to do with him.

Besides this he experienced an almost incomprehensible but not at all disagreeable notion that she now in a way belonged to him, that he had a hold on her; and this had gradually become firmer as her own people seemed to let her go. If she had no one else to rely on, should he forsake her? Her penitence was sincere. But the river was still there, and despair was lying in ambush behind her. Something told him that it was *his* hand that now kept her head above the water. He had prayed for strength so as to be able to help, and felt that he had received this strength—even if there was some sacrifice connected with it.

He had accepted one of Jack's letters, not because he wanted to read it, but he did not want to slight the confidence she placed in him and in that way hurt

her feelings. Now he felt like reading it. No one could tell—perhaps it might contain some means of safety for him if the talk should be carried too far. There were those who dared to go inexcusably far out, and he had perhaps done that, then one must clutch at something. It passed thru his mind that he had once before nearly perished for her sake. It was not only in the river that such things happened.

He found the letter and opened it.

No, he had been no shining school light, this Jack. The letter was poorly written and ill spelled.

He let his eye glance hastily over the letter and was soon interested in its contents. She must have told him what had happened at the river, for he wrote that he would never forget it and that Pastor Welde had saved three that time—"all three of us," he wrote. This was enough. Welde continued reading. He had gone to the Coast to make money so they could get married, and he had thought of sending money, he wrote. He had saved over twenty dollars already; but the way she wrote he did not know what she meant. She must know he did not mean to desert her; but it took time to get work. He had worked in the woods and it was difficult to get letters mailed, but now he was in town. Pastor Welde did not read further. He understood by hastily glancing down the sheet that it was filled with assurances of his love and all that, if she would only forgive him.

He sat a long time with the letter in his hand. A deep sadness came over him. He had no claim on her after all. He had saved her for someone else—to give her back to the one who had pushed her into the river. He saw her as in a mist, far away.

He understood it now. She had given him these letters so that he could see how matters stood. She loved this fellow; but from a feeling of gratitude she

would give him up if he—Welde—wished it. That was perhaps the reason why she had given him this letter.

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He had no living thing—nothing whatsoever, that belonged to him. The study seemed to shrink about him and become small and shabby. There stood the table, here a chair, and there another. There were the books in the shelves, and the sofa, and the letter press—silent witnesses of his being alone. When they did not take their leave, it was because they could not. But he could go away all he wanted to, and none of these things would turn around to look at him, or follow him to the door.

He was so utterly alone.

If he only had had a dog, a big St. Bernard, for instance, with devoted, faithful eyes; but Jorgina did not like dogs. Well, she would have to stand it, for now he was going to get a dog before long.

No, it was impossible to sleep. His thoughts fluttered about like a heavy and tired bird, in a circle without a resting place. He went over the whole ground again and peeped into every corner. Brooten had a perfect right to turn the key in the door of Mosevig's church. He had the law on his side. He did it to save the congregation and to save him also. A minister couldn't go about saying: "Have you heard," etc. A minister was more helpless against evil rumors than anyone else. The minister who was married was fortunate. His wife usually got hold of things. He wondered if the married ministers knew how many attacks on their character and reputation their wives had refuted and nipped in the bud. It was just punishment if such a man as Mosevig was turned out of doors. He certainly should be scourged and ousted.

He noticed an insect that flew around the lamp, and threw itself time and again against the chimney so that it gave a snap. It could not keep away; it might burn itself, but had to keep on, must keep on. He remembered having read about the dead birds around the lighthouses. No one burned themselves on the sun—the Lord's big light, the largest of all. It was only the small lights which the people lit, that were so dangerous for insects and birds and such like.

He would write to this Jack and see if he could do something for him. It was too bad for the boy, poor fellow. He meant well after all.

The thought stimulated him. He would try a cigar again. Yes, he could write and offer him a small loan, so he could get married before Christmas—and he would speak to Ellen for him. That would be best. It was the only thing to do under the circumstances—now when the boy was willing. But oh, how dreary it was. His eyes passed hungrily over the furniture again. There it all stood—and belonged to him in a way; but in another way it was unfamiliar. His glance fell on the pictures on the wall and stopped at the largest one.

In the dim light the two white figures became very prominent. They were Christ and Pilate. He had always thought that Pilate was too massive and Christ too small in proportion. He would have painted them just the opposite and had Christ large—triumphantly large even in those surroundings and under those conditions. The artist had made him quite insignificant.

But was not that what they all did? Seen with human eyes, Pilate was a very powerful master, in the community and in the hearts of men.

"Well, well!" something said within him. "How is it with you, Welde? Isn't he powerful in you too? Don't you also dabble with arithmetic settling up your an-

swers and declaring that so and so is right, while something is wrong about it? Don't you also want to be the friend of Caesar, defend your position? Pilate also had a position. He was the Roman governor in a larger community than yours, and he had someone above him. It is not easy to know what he thought. Here the people were stirred up against Jesus, there was a riot that Jesus consciously or unconsciously had given occasion to. Pilate was there to keep order. As a Roman he laid stress on order. Perhaps he thought that Jesus ought to be scourged and sent away.

Then they would have peace, thank God.

Welde wondered if Jesus thought that some of those who persecuted Him ought to be scourged. He had also scourged some, but not on His own account. It was His Father's house that it concerned, not His own person. When it concerned Himself, then His own were humbled and told to put the sword in the sheath.

Here were the same powers, the same court trial. The one had the law on his side, and the other had something that was above the ordinary ideas of law and justice. The one was backed by the records of the court, and the other only wrote in the sand. The one weighed and said: so much for this and so much for that. The other did not weigh—He only paid out, and gave away, gave away with generous hands.

Well may you speculate, Mr. Pilate. You have to deal with one who represents standards of value that are different from those you have been used to. You have divided the year into months, the months into weeks, the weeks into days, the days into hours. Still you have known long years, long hours, etc. Your calendar will not do, my man. You have divided your mile into rods, and your rods into yards, and the yards into feet, and the feet into inches. You know the dif-

ference between inches and miles and can compute distances correctly; but you feel nearer to the emperor in Rome than you do to the man who stands ten feet away from you. Your yard stick is a failure, Mr. Pilate. You have scales indicating weights from a ton to a thousandth part of a pound; but you know well that the heaviest burden anyone can carry will not move the index of an apothecary's weight. You can not measure the nearest or weigh the heaviest. And there, right before you, is One who could say that a farthing was the largest contribution in the treasury of the temple on a day when many rich people had put in large sums. How could you judge correctly here? Was it strange that many jeered and mocked Him who stands before you?

Still they would have known, if they had bethought themselves, that their measures could not be depended on, that there were other standards of value above theirs—which are not of this world.

Welde brushed the ashes from his cigar.

Ah, yes, these powers — the same, over and over again.

His thoughts again commenced to circle about Mosevig and Brooten, how the latter would put a mark on the church-door of the former and put an end to his plotting. It was right in two ways. First, right according to law, and then because Mosevig had deserved it. There certainly was a limit to what one should stand, and that limit had been passed.

"The measure of Pilate," "the weight of Pilate," said a still, small voice within him. Time and again he had tried to deaden it by recalling Mosevig's despicable undermining, done in the dark, like that of a mole.

"He is an elderly man," whispered the voice, "a large family," continued the voice; "sickly," said the

voice; "Think of all the children," it whispered; "Perhaps he doesn't know any better," it said. "It will crush him entirely," said the voice louder, "and you, what will you gain?" asked the voice still more plainly, "Aren't you contemptible, too? — somewhat revengeful, for instance?" The voice grew. "When he goes away with all his belongings, and you see the load moving away with the bureaus, washstands, and cradle, the bedding rolled up in bundles, the old writing desk, tools and rags and old chairs—then Reverend Conrad Walther Welde, you must stand at the corner right across from the church and point your finger at him and blow your trumpet and call out: 'Now you got it—for your lying tongue! Go to—with your children and your disgraced daughter. By-by!'"

Welde had forgotten to smoke. He noticed that his hand shook when he felt for a match. He rose and stood for a while stiff and motionless, looking at the small gleam from the cigar. Then he went to his writing desk, seated himself and wrote a few lines on a sheet of paper after he had torn the heading off. He signed it "a friend" and put a twenty-dollar bill in it, took an envelope and wrote Mosevig's name and address outside. This work took only a few moments. If it was brought to the postoffice by seven o'clock, Mosevig would get it by the first mail delivery.

Scarcely was this done when he took his ordinary writing paper and began to write a letter of some length. The pen moved rapidly along the paper, and line after line was formed with his own tall letters. It was to Jack. He asked him to come back. He would talk to Ellen and help him with a small loan if necessary. He would help him get a job if possible. If he preferred to stay out there, he would pay Ellen's fare. There was no end to all that he wanted to do.

Then he folded the letter and wrote the address and—there lay both letters ready. His head sank down on his folded hands on the table. He prayed that the purpose of these letters might be realized. Then he rose, yawned, and stretched his mighty limbs.

The first peep of day was visible outside. He pushed the curtain aside and saw the sky aglow with red and gold. A beautiful sight. It ought to be painted.

CHAPTER XXVI

Something remarkable had happened to Mosevig. In the morning he had received a letter written in English, with twenty dollars enclosed. The writer called his attention to the fact that if he wanted to save the church property he must hurry off this very day and pay the interest.

It struck him as a blow. It was God, the Lord, that had sent him this. He had forgotten the day the interest was due, as usual. The previous time, the trustees had to sign at the last moment. He had promised that he should not forget it another time—and now God had reminded him of it.

He figured that with this and what was in the church treasury he would get enough. He felt both proud and thankful. The eye of God watched over him and his small congregation. He almost felt like telling his wife the glad news; but it had not been his lot to get a wife with whom he could talk about important spiritual things and business matters. How often had he not both in joy and sorrow longed for a wife who was spiritually inclined and who would have been a comfort to him in matters intellectual; but it was evidently God's will that he should carry his cross alone.

He hurried to get away. He had to see a couple of the trustees first. From whom could the letter have come? It was from God—in answer to his prayer. He remembered now, or at least thought that he surely must have breathed a prayer before the letter from the bank came saying that the interest must be paid the tenth; but he was not positive about it.

He sped along and found first the one and then the

other trustee. He wanted to show them the letter. They didn't care much if he lay awake the whole night and, like Jacob, wrestled in prayer to save the church. They were busy with their merchandise. Well, man is a reed—nothing to rely on. To rely on the trustees was to make flesh his arm. They both listened penitently while he told them about his anguish of soul and the remarkable deliverance. Then he crossed over to the bank. On the way, the thought occurred to him that the twenty dollars was really his private property. The letter had said nothing about what the money was to be used for; still he would make the sacrifice. Welde and Brooten would have been glad to close the church door on him. They had the money and the power and the multitude on their side; but with him stood the Lord Sabaoth.

Mr. Brooten the banker, was plainly surprised when he took the money with a business-like air. He examined the twenty-dollar bill quite carefully and noted the number. Pastor Mosevig grew hot. Perhaps it was a counterfeit. No, Brooten smoothed it out and put it in the pile with other bills. It might be worth while to tell him, so that he understood whom he had to deal with. "I got the bill today as a present," he said. Brooten should be made to realize that Mosevig also had friends.

"As a present?" Brooten asked in surprise.

"As a present, yes! When I opened my mail I found this. A friend writes that he knows that I have to pay out a large sum today, so he sends this as a small token of regard."

"And called your attention to the fact that you must pay today—absolutely today?"

"Yes," Mr. Mosevig's heart beat loudly. Perhaps it was Brooten himself that had sent him the money. "It was a great and very welcome help," he said,

"whoever the good giver may be." A shrewd look came into his eyes. "A minister may often have friends that he knows nothing about," he said—"people who for some reason or other—business reasons, for instance—can't afford to belong to a small and insignificant congregation; but whose heart beats warmly for those that are small in the eyes of the world."

"Yes, to be sure, yes, that may be so," Brooten turned and went into his private office—to hide his emotion, Mosevig imagined, quite happy at the thought, while one of the clerks wrote down the amount.

But in his office Brooten remained sitting and drumming on his desk with his fingers. It passed his understanding. He knew the bill. It had been paid to Pastor Welde the day previous as a part of his salary. Was he playing into Mosevig's hands or had he become crazy? No, it must be someone else who had gotten hold of it and sent it.

Pastor Welde was surprised to see Mr. Brooten come that afternoon. His visits had not been frequent of late. Brooten took a seat and moved his chair close up to the minister's and sat for some time looking at him. He leaned forward and rested his right hand on his knee while he fingered his watch chain with his left hand. It was his usual position when he wanted to settle some important business. He had a fixed look; he drew himself together as it were, ready to pierce his victim with his eyes. At such times his brain worked accurately. Everything was cleared aside. He saw straight and never made a mistake.

"I should like to know how Pastor Mosevig got hold of that twenty-dollar bill that you got from me yesterday. Has he stolen it or gotten it in some other

way? To whom did you give it? I am really curious and would like to know who has been so generous or so damned idiotic as to give him notice that I wanted to foreclose the mortgage." His fingers fumbled with the gold chain excitedly, but his voice was cool and under control.

Pastor Welde was really frightened. He had great respect for Brooten as the much older man and also on account of his influence and wealth and his interest in the church. He remained sitting a while, like a school boy who is caught in the act of thoughtlessly doing something naughty.

"It was I who called his attention to it and sent him the money. Theodora happened to mention it—and I thought there could be nothing wrong in doing what I did. One minister ought to do that much for another."

"But don't you understand that this Mosevig is ruining both you and the congregation with his tongue?"

"Oh, I suppose we are not so easily ruined," the minister smiled gently.

"It certainly will not take much to ruin you here now—not very much, sir. You help along pretty well—pretty well, I think."

"Is he such a dangerous man then, this Mosevig? He seems to have enough trying to take care of himself. I can't imagine there is any danger to the congregation from that quarter."

"So that's your opinion? Only wait and see. That man means business. Only wait till he sees that the fences are down around the congregation. It will not be long before he sees it, and then he'll be there."

Pastor Welde was silent for a while. Then he rose and placed himself in front of Brooten. "Well, in God's name, let him come then," he said.

Brooten had also risen. His inborn respect for the

minister struggled with contempt for a man who would let others ride over him in such a manner—or was there something in the talk after all? Was he afraid of Mosevig? The way he had acted was not the way a person would act who did not have something rotten about him. He eyed Pastor Welde sharply and thought he saw a gleam of fear or uneasiness in the young man's eyes. He stepped up to him and said in a low voice that was almost a whisper:

"There isn't something, is there? Something—well, you're a minister, but the flesh is weak and—well, it has happened before that ministers and ministers' daughters—."

He did not get further, for Pastor Welde, who had involuntarily taken a step back, suddenly caught him over both arms. With the clumsy grip of a giant, he pinned him to the wall. There they stood breast against breast and not a word was said. The bank president's face suddenly had become gray with a touch of blue. He felt his chest pressed together till he could scarcely breathe. He was so dazed that he seemed to forget who he was, and he was stricken with terror. Above him he saw a face distorted by pain; there was also something else, a dreadful but awkward strength—the knotted sinews of the neck, muscles that bulged, veins that had swelled to an unnatural size. Then this feeling of faintness and weakness. He felt dizzy, and it seemed as tho he were caught between two freight cars. Even in his terror he could add two and two together. If this man struck him it would be the last of Brooten. He must be quiet. He heard Welde's voice, as if it were far away. "Sit down and be reasonable, Brooten, and let us talk together." And then he had a vague feeling of being lifted up from the floor and with irresistible force

placed in a chair that broke under him, so that both lay in a heap on the floor. This brought the minister to his senses.

"Did the chair break?" he said, out of breath and confused. "Let me help you. Oh, that chair. Sit down in **this** chair, Mr. Brooten."

The bank president was placed in another chair. He remained sitting there limp and flabby, his hands hanging down by his sides. It was as if something had gone to pieces inside of him and would not perform its functions. He was stunned and looked timidly at the minister, who was continually wiping his sweaty brow and making excuses for the chair as tho it were from this that the whole commotion had arisen.

His eyes followed the minister, who bustled about here and there, taking hold of things and putting them down again, opening a window and closing it again; all this as if he did not know what he should do. Brooten was unnerved mentally as well as physically, and everything seemed to swim before his eyes. The pictures on the wall danced up and down as if moved by some machinery. Most dreadful of all was a large, black body that hovered around him.

The minister looked about the room in his embarrassment and saw the cigar box. "Take a cigar, Brooten?" he said and handed him the case. Brooten raised his arm with some effort, took a cigar and put it in his mouth and began to puff at it without lighting it. When the minister brought him a lighted match he muttered a scarcely audible "Thank you."

Welde himself was confused. The bank president's utter helplessness overwhelmed him. He acted as if he wanted to make good a great wrong he had done him and still falteringly tried to make excuses for the chair that had gone to pieces. After a while he

was able to explain himself. He avoided touching upon Brooten's disgusting insinuations.

"I am very sorry that this has happened," he said. "You have always been so good to me. I have always thought a great deal of you, too." When Brooten did not say a word, he continued in a sad and low voice. "I know now what you intended to do—I understand now, that it was for my good; but I happened to think of that poor fellow and I felt sorry for him and—so I did it without thinking much of the consequences; but Brooten, dear me, what's this? Are you sick?"

Brooten had become pale as death. The cigar fell out of his mouth and his head sank down. He had fainted. When the minister took hold of him to lay him on the sofa he felt that his strength had entirely left him, and it was only with great effort that he could put him there. He shook as if from the ague. He brought water and bathed the banker's forehead, loosened his collar and unbuttoned his vest. He stroked his hair and then noticed how thin it was, and he recollected how generous Brooten had been both to the congregation and to himself.

Brooten soon revived. He raised himself a little. "Where am I?" "Is it you, Welde?"

"Yes, now you'll be all right soon, Brooten. I was so frightened about you."

Brooten drank a little water and soon recovered. The minister did not tire offering his services. Brooten could put things together. The pastor's great humility gave him back his self-confidence. He was a poor wretch, this minister, but good gracious, what strength he had. That one who was so strong could act like a whipped cur, he could not understand; but he felt like a victor when he saw Welde's anxiety in

trying to make things right again, and he listened to his attempts at excusing himself.

"I acted foolishly," explained the minister, "but you see that picture there, I have listened some to both of these, both to Him and to him (he pointed to Christ and Pilate) within me. The one said it was perfectly right the way Brooten wanted it, and the other said that Mosevig was old and the congregation poor. The one said: Mosevig ought to be horsewhipped; the other said: He ought to be helped, and so I sent the money; but I didn't know there would be such a hub-bub, otherwise I suppose I would not have done it."

Brooten felt better now, and his contempt for the minister increased. He had been paralyzed with terror when he felt the minister's terrible strength and had almost felt as if he deserved it, when the mighty arms squeezed the breath out of him. But when he now saw the same man come with empty excuses and phrases, a new feeling began to stir within him.

And this new feeling was contempt.

Brooten stopped and turned in the doorway as he left. "I hope this scene will remain between ourselves. It would be embarrassing for both of us if people should know of this."

He went, but bent over now and then like one who is sore and stiff in all his joints.

Welde followed him way out, with many regrets at what had happened.

A broad and bony form rose on the other side of the street. He caught a few of the parting words and stepped across in time to greet Pastor Welde, who was still standing on the steps.

"Good day, pastor—Good day!"

Welde had scarcely returned his greeting before Mosevig burst out into a loud, scornful laughter.

"It went into the ditch!"

"What went?"

"It went into the ditch, the foreclosure of that mortgage on the church."

"Did it?"

"You didn't succeed with your plots, you and Brooten."

"Plots? What do you mean?" Welde asked in surprise.

Mosevig straightened himself, struck an attitude and pointed upward:

"There is one above, Pastor Welde! There is one above. Look out for Him! Look out for Him!"

He understood now.

He hurried off without waiting for an answer.

Welde remained standing. It took some time before he collected his thoughts enough to go in. His straight and broad back bent as he passed thru the door, and he closed it very quietly. It was a long time before the lamp was lit on the inside.

CHAPTER XXVII

"Whom the Gods would destroy they first make mad," said Dr. Spohr in a bitter tone.

His wife sat with her needlework and remained silent. She usually took Pastor Welde's part, but just now she did not know what to say.

The doctor puffed away at his pipe. It was not the first time he was rehearsing the story of Pastor Welde's blunders. His wife's silence provoked him and he continued:

"The Brootens, the Jensens, the Holms, the Nelson Brothers, and all the leading people in the congregation are angry with the minister. The Brootens do not speak to him any more—they dig and work like moles to get rid of him. Now he could have managed—you understand, managed nicely, for all the trades-union people were with him. The former pastor was absolutely against all such unions, and said they were nurseries for socialism and atheism. These—now let me see: In the mill-workers' union, nearly all of them are Norwegians, and more than half of them belong to the church; all the workmen in Nelson Brothers' factory, almost all of them are in the congregation; then about two score men in the shoe factory; and then the tailors—certainly over two-thirds of the men belong to some union, and they have stood with the pastor all the time—especially now when he got the leading men against him. So they got up a "working-men's get-together meeting" and invited the minister to speak—it was a demonstration, you see, in a tactful manner; they wanted to let him understand that he could count on them. To be honest, it was such a clever stroke that the big-bugs in the church are mere

bunglers in church politics compared to them—and then he goes to work and spoils it all.”

Mrs. Spohr took a hairpin out of her heavy blonde hair and scratched her head with it. Her head always itched when she was curious.

“No, I don’t believe that, my dear. Why should that speech have such bad effects? I can’t understand that.”

The doctor looked searchingly at his wife. He was not in a mood for wrangling tonight. It was best to speak out plainly.

“Pastor Welde is an ass.”

“Spohr,” said his wife reproachfully. She had again taken up her work.

“Welde is an ass,” repeated the doctor and went and emptied his pipe. “Instead of speaking of the greedy capitalists who heap up great riches by depriving the poor laborer of the fruit of his labor and keep him in ignorance and oppression, and all this stuff about the curse of the trusts and Rockefeller and the rich man in hell, why—”

“What then, dear?”

“Well, instead of such things, he speaks of the workingmen’s unscrupulousness and lack of sense of responsibility towards their employers.”

“What do you say? Did he really do that?”

“Yes, he did. Spoke about servant girls who were careless about the gas, who were extravagant in the use of butter and lard and did not care if they wasted a dollar or two a week of their mistress’ money. He talked at large about the laborers who loaf on their jobs, time-servers, and those who are careless with tools and machines and not trustworthy — workers who hate their work, think ill of their employers, and actually steal from them. Housewives and business men are scouring the country hunting for servants

and workers who are reliable and conscientious with things entrusted to them because such help is so scarce."

"Yes, but in a way that is right, isn't it?"

"Oh, yes, in a way, perhaps. The one who is faithful in small matters shall be entrusted with much, he said. This applies to the individual as well as to the whole laboring class. They must begin to show their employers the consideration and interest that they want their employers to show towards them. Then the rest will come of itself: better pay, a better understanding, pensions for the old, help in sickness, a share in the profits, etc."

"But there could be nothing wrong in saying this?"

"Of course it was wrong. Why the deuce didn't he talk about the rich man in hell? You remember him, that fellow with Lazarus. That is an excellent text. Welde is a perfect idiot. Now he has the whole flock against him. They believe he made that speech in order to be on good terms with the big-bugs. You can imagine how embarrassing it was. They had expected something entirely different. No one can blame them for that. He makes himself impossible, utterly and absolutely impossible."

"But it was true, you must admit that in a way he was justified in saying it."

"Oh, fiddlesticks! Isn't one equally justified in giving these money-bags a punch on the solar plexus? Whose fault is it that the laborers and servants are the way they are? What may be said? Of course, it may be said, but he did not need to present just that side of the case, did he? But you can't fry fat out of a saw horse," he added resignedly. He would like to hear his wife take Welde's part.

But she sat quite lost in thought.

"Pastor Welde has really acted very foolishly," she

said at last. "Here was the story about that girl. She went about imagining that she could get Pastor Welde, so that when her fellow came back to marry her, she almost had to be forced to do so. It was a fine pickle for a minister to get into."

"Yes, it was fine, very fine," mocked the doctor. "Now people have got it into their heads that it was one of these marriages of convenience that the upper classes arrange to cover themselves. They can't understand why the minister should want to help her and afterwards send money to the boy to get them married—almost against the girl's own wishes. People can't understand how a man can do anything like that unless there is something rotten at the bottom of it. Well, I don't understand it myself, either."

"No, but my dear, you would have done the same, I'm sure."

"I—no—never."

"Now, don't pretend, I beg," she teased. "Didn't you want to take that Mosevig girl into our house in spite of her condition and against your own dear little wife's wishes?" she sobbed. But her sobbing was only in fun, and the doctor had to laugh. He went over to where she sat and was going to put his arm about her neck; but she still pretended to be crying.

"How much am I to be fined? Is it a new hat or dress—or perhaps a trip to Minneapolis? Dear me, how could I ever think of marrying a Danish girl? She skins me alive—that she does. Be good and let me live, so I can warn my dear countrymen against marrying Danish girls. Don't kill me by keeping me in suspense about the size of the fine."

"Let me alone!" She struck at him, but their jesting did not seem quite natural tonight. The thought of Pastor Welde weighed heavily on them both, and the doctor again sought his pipe and tobacco box. He

stood a long time fingering his pipe, absorbed in thought. Then he heard a light step behind him. It was his wife who laid both hands on his shoulders.

"Now tell me, Spohr—can't we do something to help Mr. Welde out of this pinch?"

"I might prescribe rat poison for him," said the doctor fiercely.

But his heart was bleeding.

"He will, presumably, have to seek a new call. It would, presumably, be best—perhaps—both for him and for the congregation." It was Deacon Bundegaard who spoke. He had met Andrew Thompson on the bridge and they stopped there to discuss the subject that occupied the minds of the entire congregation.

Thompson did not voice his opinion at once. He stood with his back to the railing, resting on both elbows and looking thoughtfully straight ahead. "Yes, that may be," he said at last, "but it may be difficult enough to get him to resign, for we have no definite complaint against him," he added somewhat sadly.

"Yes, that is perhaps the worst," said Bundegaard eagerly. "This is exactly what makes it so difficult for us as deacons of the congregation. If we could find some fault with him, it would be easy; the trouble is, presumably, that he is not what we took him to be. There are none who are not dissatisfied with him; but what this dissatisfaction is, the reason and the cause of it—well, that is, presumably, difficult to find out. Now our members trot over to the West side to Mosevig's church; but that will not do in the long run. Anybody can understand that. He was all right in the beginning. This is too bad, really too bad."

"Yes, it is really too bad. But what shall we do?"

As Christian people we can't discharge him off-hand, in view of the fact that we can't find any charge against him. That gossip is nothing to rest a case on, and now the girl is married and that whole matter out of the way."

Bundegaard was lost in deep meditation. "No, as Christian people we must try some other way," he said at last. "Brooten means, presumably, that we must let the minister understand that we do not have the confidence in him that we had before, and so on. He will resign willingly as soon as he sees that he is not the right man for the place; but it is too bad for him, for he is, presumably, a good-natured and kindly man."

"He is too kindly, I believe," said Thompson.

"Yes, I suppose he is," seconded Bundegaard.

There was quite a bustle in Mrs. Berven's living room. The oldest boy had been over to the baker's twice, and the coffee pot had been on and off three times. She did not make much coffee at a time. When Mrs. Storlie came, she had to put it on again, and likewise when the woman from Bergen came. And now Mrs. Thompson also sat there and did most of the talking. The old disputes were buried now. The interests of the congregation had become everything to everybody.

"There must have been something in it," Mrs. Thompson said emphatically. "Why should he send money to that Nelson boy and be so anxious to get them married? He ought to know that it looked suspicious."

"I'll tell you something," the woman from Bergen chimed in, and she began to tell about the upper class folks in Bergen, who always took care to get people married—to some one—for those that have money have power. She mentioned several instances, and an-

other woman could also confirm this with a case—a girl she had worked together with. They got money to pay their passage to America, and some money besides. No one knew how much money they got.

Mrs. Storlie had to repeat the story of the pastor and the half crazy woman from Trondhjem, who afterwards became a Holy Jumper. Well, she would soon be thru with her jumping, she imagined. But one thing was sure; she had seen this with her own eyes. She had kept still about it—never a word had come from her lips until this other story had come up. Then she could not keep quiet any longer, for the truth must be told. Oh, such a blessed man as he seemed at first.

But after she saw this—and God was her witness that it was the truth, the spirit had kind of left her and she had not been able to cry in church since that day until her fountain of tears had been loosened in Mosevig's church on the eleventh Sunday after Trinity. Neither the Communion nor funerals had done her any good, but it was better now, her fountain of tears was loosened now. It loosened also a bit when she was telling this, so it was plainly in working order now.

A woman who had said but little before, now burst forth with an emphatic: "Ah, yes, indeed! I know the men folks"—and the others joined in. The men folks are not to be trusted.

In the house next door, Mrs. Ole Narvesen went about and was angry and slammed the doors. She had shown herself several times outside with some work that she was tugging at. She intended to let these gossips see that she had other things to do than to slander the minister.

She straightened herself, and her sharp features had a look of pain. If only Welde had listened to her, then he would have been posted on what they were up

to. But he did not understand his own good and would stick up for these gossipy coffee-party women.

And that was the reason that things turned out the way they did.

In the young people's society there was a main point that all paid particular attention to, and that was, that Pastor Welde had proposed to Ellen Mosevig, but her father had said No. They were well informed in regard to this: Ellen's best friend had told it, and she had it from Ellen herself, and she **knew** that Pastor Welde had courted her even when she was engaged to Jack. The same girl friend did not want to have anything to do with Ellen now—when she had found out how she was, and she would not show herself in her company for anything in the world; but that Pastor Welde had wanted to marry her, and that her father had said No—that much she knew.

And it was evident that Welde mourned for her and would have married her and been glad to get her. It was **such** girls as Ellen that the men ran after. The decent girls did not have such a high standing.

And the decent girls felt the sting. It was all right to preach volubly about propriety, but when it came to the point, then they were most fond of girls like Ellen Mosevig. **Such** girls they would run after from one end of the country to the other.

The boys had their fun. They always have fun when they hear about an unlucky suitor; but behind it all, contempt lay in waiting. The minister who had been sky-high above them had all of a sudden tumbled down among them, a miserable figure.

It was almost impossible to get up any interesting programs any more. It was as if something had gone to pieces in their midst.

Welde must have understood that his presence put a damper on their spirits. When he stayed away and they had a new president, things went better. A gifted newcomer took his place, so all went well. The basement was filled, and Pastor Welde generally took a walk past the church when the weekly meetings were held. He walked slowly past on the other side of the street.

How gladly he would have gone inside and seated himself by the door. He thought of the pleasant memories from these meetings. He was one of those unfortunate ones who cannot forget their gleams of happiness in life—he was one who could love a closed door because it had once been open to him, and a cold hearth because it had once warmed him.

CHAPTER XXVIII

It was Christmas Eve and late in the afternoon. Pastor Welde sat in his study, fully dressed, and tried to account for his not having started on his journey home the day before, as he had intended to do.

His suitcase was packed. His fur coat hung across the back of a chair, just as Jorgina had placed it before she left. The drawers were locked, the kitchen door fastened, and the fire out in the fireplace.

Why did he sit there yet? He ought to be at home by this time—at home with father and mother.

He looked about helplessly. On the wall hung a clock that ticked so loudly that it tortured him. It was now a quarter past four. He must have slept after all.

The memory of a long and bad night rose before him. He remembered now that he had lain on the sofa, with his face buried in a pillow. He remembered that he had prayed, that he had tried to read something, that he had walked the floor up and down, up and down for hours and had looked at the hands of the clock, those hands that scarcely seemed to move.

And he had thought and thought, caught as in a net that he could not escape, perplexed and lost in a jumble of heavy and painful thoughts.

He turned halfway around in the chair and saw his own face in the mirror. It gave him a start when he saw how pale and blank it was. The beard he had grown made him look dreadfully old, he thought. He rose and stretched his limbs. He would go and bathe his face. It might help a little—and then he would find something to eat. That would also help.

He took off his coat and vest and got ready. He found everything clean and neat in the bathroom. Jorgina was capable. Every faucet shone, all was polished and bright, and the towels lay as they came from the wash, neatly folded. She prided herself on this. It seemed almost like a crime to muss anything. She had left it, believing that she would find everything shining and untouched when she came back. So he went into the kitchen, where he also found everything immaculate. He walked carefully, with a feeling of apprehension, across the floor. He seemed startled when the water came pouring out when he opened the faucet. He moistened a handkerchief and rubbed his face with it. It felt good. No one could say anything about it when he only used his own handkerchiefs. The cold water was fine anyway. He could not go like a pig with the sleep in his eyes. He carefully removed all signs of having been by the water faucet and began to comb his hair. He noticed that he was beginning to lose his hair. It was too bad. There were so many bald-headed ministers already in his church, making a display at the annual meetings. He dressed and got ready. One train left at six o'clock, and another still later. He must try to get away.

It was cold, and he began to pace the floor. It brought to his mind the memory of more than one lonely, sleepless night of late.

But it was better now. He could reflect more calmly. He did not feel this particular anxiety any more. Last night he had really got the idea that his mother was sick and dying, but that they had not wanted to tell him about it. Then he had understood what a dreadful mistake he had made in not taking the evening train as he had intended to do. In his imagination he saw her pale face turned toward the door:

Isn't he coming soon? And he had seen himself come, black crepe on the door, his father on his knees by the bed, and the others gathered around it. Oh, if God would only spare her another day. Then he had prayed and wept and moaned and had at last dressed for the forenoon train and had sat down to wait for it—and had fallen asleep and slept till the train had gone. He nearly had to laugh now. His mother was in excellent health. Then he remembered his anxiety about fire, burglars, and even ghosts, that had troubled him and driven sleep away from his couch.

He needed rest—yes, rest—only rest, he thought, as he restlessly walked back and forth.

It was perhaps only in his imagination that the congregation wanted to get rid of him. The great willingness to let him go just at the holiday season, when every minister is expected to be at his post—well, they might have other reasons.

He remembered so well—he had turned these words over in his mind for several days now—that he had said it would have been so fine to get home for Christmas. By this he had certainly not meant that he would leave his duties, but they had at once taken it seriously, both Bundegaard and the others. They had arranged with a neighboring minister who had kindly promised to fill his place. He had protested, but he found that it was already settled. Now he knew well that he also had some authority in this matter; but they might think it was the “offering,” or the gift of money usually presented at Christmas that he was afraid of losing.

Why should he ascribe such low motives to them? It might be they had seen that he needed rest.

All in all, they had been kind and indulgent toward him. Little or nothing had he been able to do.

There was little to point to and say: This is done since Welde came here. This is what **he** has accomplished. He had busied himself with his own affairs and not with theirs. He had mixed up in this and that, as, for instance, that girl affair. It was fortunate it turned out as it did. Hadn't he gone and troubled himself about this contemptible Mosevig and neglected his own church? It was not to take care of Mosevig and his thoughtless daughter he had been called. The congregation had really been indulgent toward him —.

*Come where my love lies dreaming,
Dreaming the happy hours away —.*

He checked himself and bit his lips. Time and again it had occurred of late that even very serious trains of thought had been broken by his finding himself humming a tune, or that some irrelevant quotation, or nonsense of some kind would force itself upon him. Something seemed to be going to pieces within him—his thoughts were broken and there were long, blank intervals between them.

Blankety, blankety, blank—blank—blank—!

— There it was again. What kind of nonsense was this?

He turned about with a determined air and tapped the floor with his foot.

His labors had been like his pastel sketch—a failure. He had put that girl on it as a “burning ship,” but it did not cover the short-comings. People would not have it—it could not be disposed of. People saw that it was humbug.

He was alone now, and it began to get dark. It was uncanny in the corners, and at times he was startled by some sound or other that he could not explain.

Who was Conrad Walther Welde? The pastor of Zion Congregation, who had labored here nearly two years, and had managed so poorly that he scarcely ventured to visit his own father. It was not only inside of him that something was going to pieces, but it was also outside, in the congregation.

It was Christmas, and as a minister he should have had many things to attend to, but now he had nothing to do except to pull himself together to reach some decision—to arrive at some result.

He had a congregation, and now they would have needed him, but just now they had no use for him either. He had locked himself out and had fastened the door and the key was on the inside. That was why he stood at the outside. He did not want to force his way in. Well, it seemed that they managed well inside without him. No one looked out to see if he was still standing on the steps.

That was the way matters stood between him and his congregation.

In the dark, the minister's eye caught the white figure of Christ on the painting. It stood out with remarkable clearness in the twilight of the departing day—only that and nothing else.

His thoughts fluttered towards it and circled about it like tired, wounded birds, trying to find something to rest on.

And they rested, clung fast. He had seen so many things in this painting; but now Jesus stood there alone and had to stand there alone. Everything else was gone; He alone was left.

He did not get any further, nor did he want to get any further. Only He was left in the picture now. There was nothing more to that subject.

Or—he corrected himself—so tremendously much was there to it.

Theology, dogmatics, the Church, church interests, one's calling, and this and that—he almost had to laugh.

There was but one fact to make note of, and that was, that he was not the only one who had been left alone—that they were two, that his own path had led him to the hall of judgment. He had two forces within him. It was Pilate, who always placed the congregation and the church interests before him and condemned him. That his naked soul stood trembling and alone, while listening to the many accusations, was proof that Pilate had the law on his side. But the very fact that he, Welde, had come there, that his soul had been arraigned before his reason and had found the Savior there before, that was something to abide by. His failure as a minister and church leader had brought him here. He held on to this.

And because there was nothing else to cleave to, no explanations were needed—only this, that there was certainly **One** who understood.

One who had gotten there must have walked the road which led to it. There was an explanation after all.

The bitter feeling of not being understood, of being wronged and deserted by his own, besides being helpless and without any weapons which he would or could use—he was an absolute failure seen from the angle of sober reasoning.

He understood it now, and understood himself, and would have to be understood by others.

Not in order to get help —.

He could almost weep for joy, knowing that he did not need any help now. If he only could escape being tossed about—if he only could understand how to connect these fragments of a broken mind.

Pastor Welde remained standing a long time absorbed in gazing at the lonely figure on the painting, and his eyes were filled with tears.

It was "the kingdom within you" in the highest potency. An independent kingdom, an incomprehensible kingdom, whose defeats are victories; whose mightiest are those who are trampled on; whose most powerful laws are written in the sand, and whose giants often walk by means of canes and crutches. A kingdom in which the sighs of the wretched are imperative commands, and the edicts of an emperor null and void—a kingdom that will conquer the world by not caring a whit about the world, a kingdom in which one wins that which he has lost and loses that which he thinks he has won. The most incomprehensible, the most powerful of all kingdoms, established for all eternity by a Man who was forsaken by all in the most desolate moment of his life, when He succumbed and even believed that God had forsaken Him.

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Nothing had he himself done to be placed before this tribunal. Welde was quite sure that he had performed his duties acceptably. He had wished to gather all about him, to see them all happy, and now it had come to this, that all stayed away and all were dissatisfied and he suddenly found himself all alone. It was unexpected, and for that reason very painful; but when his condition was at its worst, then he understood —.

— — — — —

"One must be kind of pulverized before he can get anything really solid out of himself."

Welde was startled. He heard this sentence distinctly spoken with a kindly drawl. He turned around and noticed that it had grown dark. He listened again. The voice had been within him. It seemed

so familiar ; but it took some time before he recollected it, and then one of his father's old church members stood out clearly before his mind. He remembered from his childhood a friendly old farmer who often came to the parsonage. His father had said that this farmer was quite a philosopher, but had otherwise been amused at his pronunciation of difficult words from the book language. He had been a man of hard luck, but he met all his difficulties with a smile of resignation and was absolutely sure that everything was for the best.

Now he stood out so vividly before Welde, this worthy old man, long ago departed. One must be pulverized before he can get anything really solid out of himself. Welde laughed aloud. There was something so recklessly contradictory in this that he had to laugh. "Aha, old Joash, are you calling on me to philosophize for me, as you did for father when I was a little boy? You were a great guy:—Old Joash with the leather breeches and the troublesome book-language,—yes, you were a great guy!"

All at once Welde gave a start and put his hand to his forehead. The hand was cold. He shivered with cold, and here he stood talking to himself. This would not do. He must get out and get something to eat and get ready for the last train. He lit the lamp and arranged his packages so that all should be ready, then hurried out.

CHAPTER XXIX

The street seemed to be alive with people and vehicles. The stores were crowded and the Christmas shopping was in full blast. The windows glittered, and behind them was a wealth of all kinds of finery. People were all very busy. They came out with their packages and met others that carried packages, hurried past each other and hastened away. Even the workingmen had their hats tilted on one side and smoked cigars. All must have made good bargains, for all seemed pleased and happy.

It must be a great pleasure to have someone to buy things for. Pastor Welde felt an irrepressible desire to buy something. To be sure! He ought to buy a box of cigars for Dr. Spohr. When he was in the cigar store, he thought of Brooten. He must get a box for him also. He wrote cards with Christmas greetings, placed them in the boxes and ordered them sent the next morning.

He felt light of heart as he again was out in the street, but after a while he remembered that he ought to get something for Mrs. Ole Narvesen, whom he had snubbed so sharply. Yes, he'd get something for Ole, too. Then for the Larsons, Thompsons, Storlies, the Bundegaards, and still others. Welde went shopping from store to store, and the more he bought the happier he became. On every package he wrote a name and address and a "Merry Christmas." He had many packages to carry now, tho all those going to the same family were put in one bundle. He was loaded down with packages and still thought he must get more. Ole had a bigger family than any of his acquaintances. He even bought a present for

old Joash—Joash, who had been dead a half score of years, but he did not remember that. Instead, he remembered Joash's mittens, with big holes in them, that he used to put by the stove hearth—Joash who had to be pulverized before anything really solid could be made out of him. Welde laughed inwardly. Oh, yes, that Joash! He must get sheepskin gloves for him; the biggest in the whole store. A fist as big as a ham hung down from each side of Joash. Welde laughed again. Oh, that Joash! He was surely a great guy.

A couple of persons slackened their speed, and looked at him with surprise, and then began to giggle. Then he understood that he had been talking aloud to himself. He coughed, felt ashamed, and hurried on a few blocks before he went into another store.

While standing in Wilburg and Thompson's large store he found that he did not have any more money. The clerk knew him, however, and said he would send the bill. Welde felt greatly embarrassed that this should happen. Feeling ashamed of this, he went into another store, selected goods and hunted in vain for money in his empty purse.

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But now he must deliver these packages before it got too late.

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The day had been raw and chilly, and now something hung in the air that would go neither up nor down. It was neither rain nor snow; it was something between the two. The sidewalks were sticky from a mixture of mud and ice that would neither melt nor freeze. It was not light enough to let one walk with confidence, and not dark enough to urge one to take care, so people slid and pushed against

each other. The electric lights were in their places and on their posts. They had the required number of volts prescribed by the city council, and the graphite points glowed as intensely as ever; but the lights did not show to advantage; they shone faintly, with a yellowish tint, tho no fault could be found with them. The fault was with the atmosphere.

A clammy fog had settled over the city. It was motionless and came from nowhere in particular. No one could say: Here it is more dense than elsewhere. It encompassed and covered all and filtered thru everywhere and found a person's shivering and naked skin, thru layers of woolens and flannels. In the dim light from a store window one could see the fog, like millions of icy threads, fine like those spun by the silk worm, but sharp, and whichever way one tried to turn they always headed directly for his bosom.

People could not find their way as in clear weather. The objects became uncertain and changeable. The houses grew smaller, the doorways became narrower, but the pedestrians one met loomed like giants that one must get out of the way of and quickly too. Those that were sure of their way pulled their coat collars up about their ears, plunged forward, and heard and saw nothing. No one walked erect any more—they pushed ahead with all their packages and things, bent towards the mud on which their feet were treading.

A drunken man staggered along with uncertain steps; he slipped but regained his balance—pulled himself together and went against a lamp post, braced himself up again and went against a wall.

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Pastor Welde was at last thru with his purchases.

He could not carry much more now, and his pockets bulged out magnificently. He really looked like the head of a family with cares and burdens, he thought to himself. When he started out, plunging forward and looking neither to right nor left, no one could doubt but that he had a very large family.

Wives by the score, children by the hundred. He really had to laugh.

A Santa Claus—that's what I am, he thought further. It's too bad the way chimneys are arranged nowadays. People do not expect anything from above any more, we live in a doubting and prosaic world.

He had to restrain himself so as not to laugh aloud. The effort increased his headache, which had troubled him the whole evening. Cold shivers passed thru him. He wanted to button up his coat, but his hands were too full. Then he began to stumble. There was no sidewalk any further. He looked around and understood that he was in the outskirts of the town. He gathered his wits and turned about. He was seriously frightened. This was not where he was to go. He walked rapidly; it was already late, and he had several places to go.

He walked and walked.

His fancy took another direction now. He saw before him the happy faces of the Narvesens and the Larsons and the others that he would call on. He would have some fun with Narvesen. He would knock at the door and hide, and when Ole stuck his nose out he would give him a good scare; the Thompsons had to be handled differently, altogether differently—and Bundegaard would, presumably, have to be taken in still another way. He would have to begin by saying: "As it is Christmas Eve, presum-

ably," etc. He laughed, but he had grown cold and felt that his chin shook as he opened his mouth. Then he bit his teeth together and walked on.

Here was a house that he knew. Why, it was Thompson's house. He recognized everything. Once they had lived in quite a poor house, but that was a long time ago. He felt almost abashed at the thought of their living in such a fine house now and was ashamed of his humble gifts. He went up the steps and knocked at the door. A girl opened it. No, there was no one by that name here. The door was closed and he was left in the cold and raw night air. Then all at once he remembered that it was not the Thompsons but the Bundegaards who lived in this house. He was quite provoked at himself. It was a shame to ring again. After a few moments' hesitation he rang again, and the maid once more opened the door.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "but it was not Thompsons but Bundegaards I wanted—a strange forgetfulness on my part—Evan Bundegaard—?"

The girl shook her head and could scarcely keep back a smile. To think that such fine people could get that way on Christmas Eve. "You'll find him if you go till you find him," she said with an assumed seriousness, and with a titter she slammed the door shut.

Pastor Welde continued his wandering. He was not of those who give up very quickly. He tried several other places. There were none that knew those he inquired about, yet every time he was sure he knew the house.

His head ached. Something pounded and hammered within. In merciless beats it came and kept time to the following stanza: "A child is born in

Bethlehem, in Bethlehem." He repeated these words incessantly, keeping time to the dull beats that seemed to be carried upward from below, so that it rang in his ears as he staggered along the deserted streets, with his arms full of packages.

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He had met a pedestrian and asked for Harrison Street. That person had not heard the name before and advised him to ask the policeman. "They know everything," he said.

"They know everything," Welde repeated again and again, and when at last he seated himself on a stone step to rest he remembered that it was Garfield Avenue he should have inquired about. Now he would wait until a policeman came. **They know everything.**

CHAPTER XXX

They had celebrated a very happy Christmas at Ole Narvesen's. According to Norwegian custom they had their Christmas tree Christmas Eve.

At eleven o'clock the children had received their presents, and the smallest ones were now sleeping, with their toys in their arms.

They had had coffee together with Ole's niece, who worked for an American family in another part of town. She had spent Christmas Eve with them. After the coffee they had candy and nuts. They had everything in fine style this Christmas. The niece had to leave at last, and Ole was going to escort her. After some talking, it was decided that Mrs. Narvesen should go along also. Being tired after all the work, she thought it would do her good to get out. Selma, the oldest daughter, was to take care of the house and could do that all right.

They had taken the niece home and Ole and his wife were on their way back. Ole was in a very cheerful mood. He held a cigar in the corner of his mouth, of a brand that Pastor Welde jokingly had called "Flora de smellibus Bado." Ole had taken his wife's arm, and they walked along nudging each other. Ole even acted as if he were a little drunk, in his exuberant good humor. He would fain hear his wife scold him in a mild voice. He even tried to trip her up—accidentally, of course.

Walking along they encountered a man who sat huddled together on the steps right across from Pastor Welde's residence. They became serious at once. Mrs. Narvesen wanted to deliver a lecture on the

drink habit, but Ole wanted to shake the man so as to get him up. He took hold of him and said: "What the Dickens is the matter, partner, you're all right."

"We will direct you, mister. Where do you live?" Mrs. Narvesen joined in with her very best English.

The person addressed lifted his head slowly and looked at them.

"It's Welde, Ole," and Ole let go his hold. They stood still a moment, unable to find words.

"Are you—are you sick?" Ole finally stuttered.

Pastor Welde tried to say something, but he only uttered some inarticulate sounds, he shivered and his mouth refused to open. He only nodded his head.

They helped him up. He took hold of his packages and felt of his bulging pockets, and a happy smile passed over his face, while he shrugged his shoulders as if he was cold.

They followed him across the street and helped him in. They lit the lights and built a fire. Ole hurried off to get the doctor. There was no time to lose. Mrs. Narvesen remained. Her weariness had vanished. She took care of the minister, helped him undress and got him to bed. Then he became warm.

"Thank you, many thanks," he said, but he did not seem to know her.

At last Ole came with the doctor. He thought the pastor had gone east and was very disturbed when he heard that Pastor Welde was at home alone and sick. He settled down in the sick room at once. Mrs. Narvesen also remained, and Ole had to go home alone.

When he came home he found his daughter at her post. After sending her to bed he sat a long time alone, among the remains of the Christmas festivities, and smoked his "Smellibusses," but his face, that usually was so jolly, was now very grave.

"It's the heart, it's the heart that's defective," Dr. Spohr complained when he came home from his sick call. It was the heart that caused his misgivings. He might be able to pull a body so free from alcohol thru an attack of pneumonia, but it was, as said before, the heart that failed.

Welde's bed was moved into his study, which was now converted into a sick room. Jorgina had returned, and a trained nurse had taken the place of Mrs. Narvesen, who had faithfully held out the first days. His parents had been informed of his illness and were expected.

Welde lay quiet most of the time. Even when he was delirious he spoke in a low voice. He asked about streets that no one knew and names that no one had heard about. At other times he wanted to get up; but when they told him that the doctor had said he should be quiet, he grew docile at once.

It was not difficult to take care of him, the nurse said.

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Jorgina was out in the kitchen, busy with her baking. The pastor's mother was coming. She must stir up a cake or two and look after some other things also. The nurse was taking her after dinner nap, and Jorgina had left the doors open clear thru, so she could hear if Welde asked for anything.

She was so glad now because the pastor was better. He had been in his right mind this afternoon. She stood thinking about what he meant, when he had called her in and asked her if she would do him a service. There was a letter in a blue envelope, with a French stamp on it, in the drawer. The address was in the corner of the envelope. She should write to that lady and say that he would come.

What did he mean by that?

Soon after he had called her again and said that she must write to his parents for him and say that he was coming.

What could that mean?

And the strangest of all—he had pointed to that Pilate picture that hung right across on the opposite wall, and asked her if she saw the white figure in the center of the painting.

She had answered yes to this. What else could she answer, for everyone could see that.

“What would you say, Jorgina,” he had said, “if that figure turned right around and looked at you?”

“That must have been only imagination,” she had said. But he had only shaken his head.

And that face, that face—Jorgina had to cry. She had to turn away from the eggs she was beating—he had looked at her with such a happy expression—tho she was only a servant in the house.

She got up and was going to find a handkerchief. Her old eyes did not see clearly any more, and no one can beat eggs unless the eyes can see clearly.

All at once she stopped—she heard something—now she heard Welde’s voice.

“I’m coming—now. Yes, I’m coming!” he called out. Jorgina hurried to wipe her hands and run in: but directly after the words there came a noise as of something heavy falling.

When she came to the door the minister was on his knees before the sofa, which had been moved to make room for the bed and now stood directly under the painting. The nurse came at the same time, and both she and Jorgina saw the head that was lifted toward the painting, drop forward.

Each of the two women took hold of one of his arms, but he was too heavy for them. The nurse felt his pulse and began to chew her lower lip.

Pastor Welde was no more.

CHAPTER XXXI

It was decided that Pastor Welde's body should be brought to his home and buried there. They were to have a memorial service in the church of Zion. They had made elaborate preparations. In front of the church stood the massive black coffin, covered with flowers. The pulpit was draped in black. Busy women had spent the forenoon there, and Mrs. Andrew Thompson and Mrs. Berven had had a good chance to show what they could accomplish when they were agreed. Never had anyone seen anything more beautiful—it nearly took one's breath away to look at this wealth of decorations, palms, and wreaths.

Bank President Brooten had not been idle either. Time and again he had been over to the church to help. He wiped his perspiring forehead and praised the women and asked if they needed more to decorate with—if so, he would get it.

They must have it suitably decorated, for one of the most prominent speakers of the church was to preach at the memorial service, and his fame had gone before him.

In the basement the choir was practicing, "Wake, awake, for night is flying." That had been Welde's favorite hymn.

In a house on the west side, a woman was sponging the knees of a pair of trousers, trying to take the shiny look out of them. Her husband, Pastor Mosevig, had been invited to offer a prayer at the service, and she kept sponging and pressing energetically with the firm conviction that they would get a prayer that would do her husband and her church credit. While working, she thought how strange it was that such a

large, strong man should die, and wondered what kind of a minister they now would get in the congregation.

It was quiet in the parsonage, and there was a big, black bow at the door. Jorgina sat in the kitchen and told a small, refined looking, elderly lady dressed in black, for the twentieth time how Welde had had a cold and had coughed ever since he had been out fishing once in the fall and had fallen into the river. She conscientiously refrained from telling how it had happened. She had received her instructions from himself regarding it, and she knew a servant's duties.

But she told about everything else, and her narrative came by fits and starts, for she cried a great deal. She cried still more when the gentle little lady tried to comfort her and asked her to come home with them.

Jorgina had worked both for Pastor Wangel of the Synod and Pastor Nelson of the United Church; but they were so different from Pastor Welde—there were so many things about him that were different.

And they both wept together, Mrs. Welde and the old servant girl, especially when she repeated what he had said at the last. They both agreed that it seemed almost impossible to believe that he was gone.

Outside, among the naked trees, a stately elderly gentleman walked about and kicked the dry leaves aside. It was winter and still not winter. It was neither cold nor warm, neither sunshine nor rain—it was the kind of weather that people die in.

He wanted to be alone now, and walked alone among the naked trees. Out on the sidewalk some pedestrians hurried by and cast quick glances aside.

"That is his father," they said.

But in the study a smoothly-shaven, broad-shouldered, compactly built man walked about, absorbed, as

it seemed, in his own thoughts. He was the widely known orator of the church, who was now to preach at the memorial service.

His mouth was large but well formed. His chin was firm and his face expressive. The marked features were softened by a pair of friendly brown eyes that flashed when he now and then stopped his walking. He was erect in spite of many years, and his bearing was that of an officer. He stopped now and then and threw out a white, well formed hand, when he had a new idea, but pushed it into his steel gray hair when he lost the thread of his discourse.

He had promised his old friend, Pastor Welde, that he would speak on this occasion, and he wished to speak so that it would make an impression.

It was his method when he spoke to select some strong point in his subject and throw himself with all his might against this. He would pass by everything unessential and concentrate his strength as much as possible on a single point. Experience had taught him that in this way he could carry his audience with him. In this way he could reach something and could bring out something.

So he hunted for something prominent about the deceased that he could bring out like a flourish of trumpets. He felt the power within him to bring this out, but he hunted in vain for some cardinal virtue, or some certain strongly developed, praise-worthy quality.

The young man was gifted; had been brought up in a good home, was exemplary in his conduct, was conscientious in the execution of his duties—but—he had been given one of the best parishes in the church, and altho he had discharged his clerical duties faithfully, there was really nothing of importance about his work, which could be pointed out.

The well groomed hand found its way up to the steel gray hair and took a firm hold of it.

That was the trouble with the younger generation; they had no definite aim, no set purpose, and did not say: This I **will** do and that I **will** do. It was this that had characterized the pioneer ministers. They were church builders, leaders, and conquerors. They went out to gain territory. They had a fixed and concrete purpose.

That was the trouble with the younger ones; they did not place any high aims before themselves.

And he continued to walk, while he vainly sought some strong point behind which he might marshal his thoughts and from which he could send them like a military charge against the audience.

He stopped before the painting and stood a while and viewed the well known scene.

It struck him that He, Christ, who stood there on the picture, had evidently not set Himself a fixed and concrete purpose either.

He stood a while quite perplexed thinking of this.

Then he made a gesture. Christ was Himself the object. When He did not set Himself a fixed purpose, it was because He was Himself the object and aim.

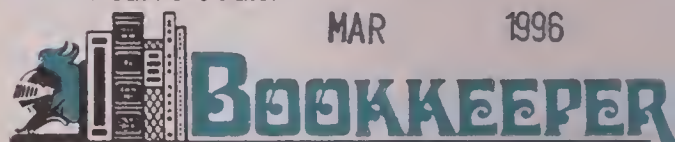
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And the widely known orator of the church continued his restless walking, groping after some prominent trait of character of the deceased that he could hurl at the great audience like a fanfare.

THE END

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